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A Case Study in a Self-financing Vocational Institute in Hong Kong

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**Chinese Language Needs of South Asian Undergraduates:
A Case Study in a Self-financing Vocational Institute in Hong Kong**

Emil Ka-leung, LI

A dissertation submitted to the University of Bristol in accordance with
the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Education

September 2019

(Word Count: 45,125)

DECLARATION

I declare that the work in this dissertation was carried out in accordance with the Regulations of the University of Bristol and Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes. The work is original except where indicated by special reference in the text and no part of the dissertation has been submitted for any other degree.

Any views expressed in this dissertation are those of the author and in no way represent those of the University of Bristol.

The dissertation has not been presented to any other university for examination in the United Kingdom or overseas.

Signed: _____

Date: 18 September 2019

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Thank you with all my heart. It is to them that I dedicate this dissertation.

ABSTRACT

In recent years, there has been growing concern over the hurdles home-grown ethnic minority (EM) students have to surmount in the local education arena in Hong Kong, of which the learning of the Chinese language is regarded as the most challenging. Insufficient Chinese proficiency is frequently cited as a major hindrance preventing them from successful recruitment and employment. In the context of Hong Kong's education system, the mainstream Chinese language curriculum fails to cater to the diverse language needs that local EM students have. It is therefore of paramount importance to design a Chinese as a second language curriculum that truly accommodates their practical language needs for vocational purposes. To this end, understanding the language barriers encountered by EM individuals in the local workplace and investigating what language requirements are needed in order to function linguistically in the local job settings should be the first step in the process of curriculum development.

Adopting a qualitative case study approach and applying Hutchinson and Waters' bottom-up needs analysis (NA) model, this research study aimed to explore the contextualised Chinese language learning needs of EM undergraduate students by examining the language barriers encountered during their internship engagement in various local workplace settings. Empirical data were collected via two key instruments: Focus Group (n=11) and Diary-interview Method (n=6), triangulated by semi-structured interviews of different stakeholders (n=6). The case being studied was a self-financing tertiary institution established by the Vocational Training Council.

The major findings of this study revealed that three language needs (*Necessities*, *Lacks* and *Wants*) of EM undergraduate students encompassed not only linguistic needs such as spoken language skills, professional terminology, and different types of socio-linguistic, pragmatic and phonological knowledge for specific communicative situations and target audiences, but also affective desires for job security and sustainability, social inclusion and integration, and emotional wellness. In addition, these three language needs existed in relation to one another, i.e. *Necessities* arose according to the job requirements and workplace settings; *Lacks* referred to self-aware language deficiencies in that physical environment; and *Wants* stemmed from a desire for psychological betterment through the required language abilities. *Necessities* seemed to be fundamental for survival in the workplace, and only when *Necessities* were satisfied could *Wants* be addressed. What emerged was a progressively relational need translated from *Necessities* to *Wants* and this study coined it "*Wanecessities*".

Situated in the fissure between tertiary education and workplace paradigms, this study sought to contribute to conceptual and empirical knowledge relating to the NA-based curriculum design of learning Chinese as a second language for vocational purposes in Hong Kong. Only with a tailor-made Chinese language curriculum, can EM tertiary students build their linguistic competence as well as confidence to a level that will lead them to perform effectively in their future workplaces.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ApL(C)	Applied Learning Chinese
CMI	Chinese Medium of Instruction
CNP	Communicative Needs Processor
CSL	Chinese as a Second Language
CVP	Chinese for Vocational Purposes
DSE	Diploma of Secondary Education
EDB	Education Bureau
EM	Ethnic Minority
EMI	English Medium of Instruction
EOP	English for Occupational Purposes
ERB	Employees Retraining Board
ESP	English for Specific Purposes
FDE	Faculty of Design & Environment
FMH	Faculty of Management & Hospitality
FST	Faculty of Science & Technology
GCE	General Certificate of Education
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
HKSAR	Hong Kong Special Administrative Region
IGCSE	International General Certificate of Secondary Education
IVE	Institute of Vocational Education
JUPAS	Joint University Programmes Admissions System
L2	Second Language
LSP	Language for Specific Purposes
MOI	Medium of Instruction
NA	Needs Analysis
NCS	Non-Chinese Speaking
NGOs	Non-governmental Organisations
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PSA	Present Situation Analysis
QF	Qualifications Framework
SA	South and Southeast Asian
THEi	Technological Institute of Higher Education
TSA	Target Situation Analysis
UGC	University Grants Committee
VTC	Vocational Training Council

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Chapter One – Introduction

1.1 Background

Education is known as the gateway to one's future, not only enabling individuals to unleash their potential, but also being instrumental in fulfilling their life goals. Famous as a unique nexus of Eastern and Western cultures, Hong Kong has been receiving international praise for its quality educational and schooling system, and yet the society continues to witness persistent underachievement of ethnic minority students residing there (Erni and Leung, 2014, Law and Lee, 2013, Unison, 2016a).

Since the handover to the Chinese sovereignty in 1997, learning Chinese as a second language of ethnic minority students has been a critical education issue that arouses increasing public concern. The language barrier often seems to constitute a major yet rudimentary obstacle to ethnic minority residents of Hong Kong in particular to their employment opportunities, career prospects and life advancement. This predicament is more obvious among South Asian ethnicities, as repeatedly evidenced by local empirical research studies (Li and Chuk, 2015), survey reports of non-governmental organisations (Caritas Hong Kong, 2007, Hong Kong Christian Service, 2006, Unison, 2011), press articles (Chan, 2005, Clem, 2008, Nip, 2010) and media programmes (Television Broadcasts Limited, 2014, Television Broadcasts Limited, 2015) pertinent to these underprivileged ethnic minority groups. The following section provides a synopsis of ethnic minorities in post-colonial Hong Kong.

1.2 The context: Ethnic minorities in Hong Kong

According to the most recent bi-census report, 584,000 Hong Kong residents are classed as ethnic minorities, constituting approximately 8% of the city's whole population (Census and Statistics Department, 2015). Many ethnic minorities (EM), in particular those from South Asia (SA), have maintained a presence in Hong Kong since the British national flag was historically hoisted in 1841 (Erni and Leung, 2014). The history of Hong Kong records that the earliest settlement of South Asians from Nepal, Pakistan and India was mainly for military, labour and trading purposes as part of the expansion of the British Empire (Weiss, 1991). Most of their descendants still living here today can trace back their family backgrounds in Hong Kong at least two generations. Hence, they have already established a deep-rooted sense of belonging in Hong Kong and they see the city as *home* (Tsung, 2009a). For various reasons, the community of ethnic minorities in Hong Kong seems amorphous. It might therefore be helpful to understand the terms that are associated with ethnic groups in different discourses.

1.2.1 Explanation of terminologies

In the wealth of literature on the topic, different terms are used in connection with ethnicity, among which “ethnic minority” and “minority ethnic” are the most commonly found. In terms of collocational patterns, the term “ethnic minority” places an emphasis on ethnicity, implying that the issue is with people being members of a non-dominant social group, i.e. non-Chinese people in Hong Kong. This collocation can be reversed as “minority ethnic” to indicate the fact that everyone has his or her ethnicity and the issue being referred to relates solely to members of minority groups.

Although a less inclusive meaning, the term “ethnic minority” is widely seen in government and social spheres in Hong Kong. In government discourse, ethnic minorities are defined by their geographic locations, for example, Filipinos, Indians, Indonesians, Japanese, Koreans, Nepalese, Pakistanis, Thais, Vietnamese, and a general category of Whites referring to Anglo-Caucasians from Europe, North America and Oceania. The term “ethnic minority” used by the government is thus all-inclusive. Yet, this seemingly generic term is rarely used vernacularly to refer to Caucasians and northeast Asians such as Japanese and Koreans, whose members enjoy a comparatively higher socio-economic status. If considered literally, the term “ethnic minority” has a mathematical connotation, i.e., the smaller size of one ethnicity as compared to those in the majority. Yet if taken from the angle of economic development, being small in size does not necessarily mean that the ethnic group is not significant in terms of economic contribution. Mathematical smallness does not always correlate with economic smallness. In fact, the status of being a minority has more to do with power, cultural awareness and distribution of resources than simply with statistical numbers (Healey, 2013). Therefore, the terms “South Asians” and “expatriates” have evolved in order to clearly delineate sociological differences in public life. As far as the government and NGOs are concerned, ethnic minorities refer exclusively to South Asian ethnic groups. According to the latest figure from the Census and Statistics Department (2013), Hong Kong is *home* to over 123,000 SA residents, or 1.8% of the total population.

In the context of Hong Kong, Chinese as a language generally refers to Cantonese for the spoken form and Standardised Modern Vernacular Chinese for the written form. In educational discourse, students with different ethnic origins are defined linguistically as non-Chinese speaking (NCS) students whose mother tongue is not Chinese, regardless of their ethnicities. They learn Chinese as a second language in order to reach the necessary level of Chinese proficiency for social, academic and vocational

communication purposes.

For the research data to be relevant and useful in the context of Hong Kong, this thesis would adopt using the term “ethnic minority” (EM) to ensure consistency with the local government, education bodies and concern groups. However, the author is well aware of the different interpretations and limitations of this term as previously described and every effort is made to present information in an appropriate context, as well as to disaggregate the findings where relevant. In addition, “South Asians” (SA) is adopted as a compressed term to signify the ethnic minority groups being researched: Pakistanis, Indians, Nepalese, Filipinos, Indonesians and Vietnamese.

1.2.2 A macro background: South Asians in a disadvantaged position

The visibility of SA residents in Hong Kong society has changed since its decolonisation in 1997, but they continue to face different challenges stemming from their ethnicity, of which education is the biggest, in particular the learning of Chinese (Tsung, 2009a). However, language learning needs do not exist in a vacuum. According to local literature on ethnic minority education, their existence can be inferred from a macro socio-political and socio-economic perspective that includes (1) political instrumentalism, (2) linguistic utilitarianism and (3) professionalisation of occupations. These three interrelated factors have played an influential role in affecting language use in post-colonial Hong Kong.

(1) Political instrumentalism

Since the handover, the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) has put much effort into strengthening its relationship with the motherland, China. Such an effort is manifested through legislating the official status of Chinese (Poon, 2010). At the constitutional level, Article 9 of the Basic Law declares that Chinese is given a “co-official language” status alongside English, stipulating that either Chinese or English can be used as an official language of Hong Kong for communication purposes between government officials and members of the general public. Further, the Official Languages Ordinance has been amended to require any new laws to be enacted and published bilingually in both English and Chinese. A hidden political agenda behind all these legislative moves is to rekindle or promote stronger national identity under Beijing’s reclaimed jurisdiction.

On the other hand, at the educational level, the status of “Chinese-ness” has been perpetuated or even elevated through the implementation of two education policies by the Education Bureau (EDB), namely the Bi-literacy and Tri-lingualism policy and the

Mother Tongue Language Policy (Loper, 2004). The former promotes Hong Kong becoming a bi-literal (two scripts: Chinese and English) and tri-lingual (three tongues: Cantonese, Mandarin/Putonghua and English) society, while the latter popularises the use of Chinese language as the medium of instruction (MOI) in schools (Evans, 2013, Kennedy, 2012). As part of this language education reform, all Hong Kong school-aged students of government or government-aided schools, regardless of ethnicity, are required to study a common curriculum including the study of the Chinese language. However, as L2 learners, Chinese is alien to most SA students. Worse still, no alternative curriculum is ever in place to cater to their specific language learning needs (Kennedy, 2012). Certainly, the overall thrust of these language policies does not in any way harm SA students; however, forcing them to learn Chinese at the level meant for native speakers hinders the opportunity to further their post-secondary education (Shum et al., 2011). Their employment prospects will in turn become dimmer. The upsurge in using Chinese that is resulted from the above policy formulation and educational revamping has indirectly led to the second factor: linguistic utilitarianism in the workplace.

(2) Linguistic utilitarianism

Back in Hong Kong's colonial days, English was used as the workplace lingua franca (Chan, 2005). South Asians, specifically Nepalese, Pakistanis and Indians, were eligible to work in the health care sector and government departments, especially in law enforcement units such as the Police Force, the Immigration Department and the Correctional Services Department. As mentioned previously, the post-colonial era of Hong Kong has marked a political return to the official role of the Chinese language. The Census and Statistics Department (2013) reports that the latest figure of Hong Kong people using Chinese as a daily communication language is over 95%, whereas only 3% of people see English as a sole lingua franca at their workplace and in everyday life. Chinese as a practical language has surpassed English as evidenced in a large number of job advertisements in the local labour market that specify proficiency in Chinese as a major language requirement (Caritas Hong Kong, 2010, Unison, 2016a, Unison, 2016b). Some academics and social justice campaigners have also found that there has been an upsurge in speaking Cantonese for workplace communication in both private and public sectors (Gao, 2011, Tsung et al., 2010). Gao (2011) argues that under China's sovereignty, this newly-added language requirement for Chinese literacy has created socio-economic costs for local South Asians, i.e. due to their deficiency in Chinese, they have now lost access to the jobs their predecessors were once eligible to apply for.

In addition, a government survey reveals that some local employers are unwilling to hire ethnic minority applicants because their poor grip of Chinese might result in communication barriers at the workplace (Census and Statistics Department, 2009). Lai (2005) points out that fluency in and mastery of the Chinese language will soon become a practical linguistic edge that assists ethnic minority learners to climb higher on the social, educational and occupational ladder. Besides the enhanced role of the Chinese language in the workplace, professionalisation of occupations is another contributing factor that poses serious challenges for SA residents.

(3) Professionalisation of occupations

In response to globalisation, Hong Kong has positioned itself as an international hub in Asia that aims to provide a unique pathway into the world's economies via provision of quality professional services (Law and Lee, 2013). This has led to professionalisation across the local services industry with a high number of semi-skilled jobs now requiring applicants to possess a post-secondary qualification, good bilingual competence and even a recognised certificate issued by professional bodies (ibid). Before the handover, the property management sector would very much favour Nepalese job seekers who were stereotypically characterised as possessing a soldier-like body and thus hired as a security guard, but today's employers are inclined to give candidacy to applicants who have passed a required licensing examination. Sadly, the examination concerned is available in Chinese only. In a similar vein, domestic property management companies tend to choose university graduates because of the professionalisation of the industry (Ku and Wong, 2008). Without a higher education qualification and adequate Chinese language proficiency, SA residents in Hong Kong will be relegated to an even lower class, struggling to simply make ends meet.

In a nutshell, the Hong Kong government under Chinese sovereignty has assigned the dominant language, i.e. Chinese, comparatively stronger linguistic capital through legislation and policy implementation (Gao, 2011). The language barrier encountered in the academic domain as well as in the job market is a major rudimentary obstacle that SA descendants are currently facing. Against this political, linguistic and socio-economic backdrop, this research study aims to explore the language barriers experienced by and the resulting language needs of undergraduate SA students of a vocational tertiary institute in Hong Kong. The following sections provide the statement of the research problem together with three key questions requiring researched answers.

1.3 Statement of the research problem

South Asian students make up 2.4% of the total school-aged population of Hong Kong, and only a tiny portion of them are academically capable of furthering their post-secondary studies (Tsung et al., 2010). The main cause of failure in matriculation is because of their persistent underachievement in learning Chinese and using it to learn other subjects at school (Li and Chuk, 2015). In recent years, the issues of Hong Kong students with minority ethnic origins have been put under the research spotlight. Much of the existing literature centres on (1) their learning difficulties relating to acquisition of the Chinese language at kindergarten, primary and secondary education levels (Ku, 2006, Tsung et al., 2010, Unison, 2011, Shum et al., 2014, Wong and Lin, 2014, Leung and Cheung, 2017), (2) the formulation and implementation of education policies from the perspectives of social justice, equality and mobility (Erni and Leung, 2010, Loper, 2004, Yau Tsim District Outreaching Social Work Team 2000, Yau Tsim Mong Integrated Centre for Youth Development, 2002), and (3) social integration relating to religious and cultural practices at school (Ho and Chan, 2009, Lo, 2008, Sung, 2005). Yet, very few studies touch upon the actual linguistic plight of SA post-secondary students and their practical needs of learning Chinese as a second language for key aspects of their academic life and future employment.

Given the fact that professional qualifications nowadays and their recognition are no longer gained from the traditional apprenticeship mode, an ultimate responsibility for nurturing competent individuals for a well-established society and a knowledge-based economy like Hong Kong's lies heavily with higher education (Gilomen, 2003, Hartig et al., 2008). The development of appropriate competencies including language proficiency should appear on the priority list. To some degree, employability of university graduates is associated with their language proficiency (Wamba, 2010). This is particularly the case for home-grown SA tertiary students in Hong Kong who have staggered, tripped and finally hurdled their way to higher education. As Loper (2004) reports, low Chinese proficiency would limit ethnic minority students' career options, and thus research on understanding the language barriers encountered in the local workplace of ethnic minority tertiary graduates and assisting them to fully function in the domestic labour market is urgently required.

As a member institution of the Vocational Training Council (VTC), the Technological and Higher Education Institute of Hong Kong (THEi) is established for the advancement, promotion and development of education suited to the developing needs of Hong Kong, with a mission of being a leading edge institution in higher education acknowledged for work-ready graduates and strong industry attachments.

THEi currently offers 22 accredited vocationally and professionally oriented degree programmes in three different faculties: the Faculty of Management and Hospitality (FMH), the Faculty of Science and Technology (FST) and the Faculty of Design and Environment (FDE) (see Appendix 1 for the List of Degree Programmes Offered by THEi in AY2019-20). Besides local students, THEi accepts non-Chinese speaking applicants who are either ethnic minority students educated locally or those from overseas countries. In recent years, THEi has recorded a gradual increase in the annual intake of secondary school graduates with ethnic minority backgrounds, especially those from South Asia. Normally, THEi treats its ethnic minority students the same as international ones, i.e., both groups are considered non-Chinese speaking students and thus automatically exempted from taking Chinese language courses. However, unlike overseas students who will return to their home countries as soon as they finish their undergraduate degrees, home-grown ethnic minority students at THEi intend to enter the local labour market after graduation. If the ultimate education goal of THEi is to fully prepare its students to be work-ready in society, it is inarguably necessary to equip its ethnic minority students with sufficient vocational Chinese language skills to fully function in the local workplace. Why then would THEi waive their attendance of Chinese classes? There is clearly a mismatch between practice and goals. This is the reason that has prompted me to conduct the current exploratory study using THEi as a case study to investigate what Chinese language needs are considered important by South Asian undergraduate students in Hong Kong.

1.4 Research aims and objectives

This research study set out to investigate home-grown SA undergraduate degree students' authentic language needs drawn from their internship experience through which the researcher could not only understand how they perceived the Chinese language in a variety of communication events and tasks in the workplace of Hong Kong, but more specifically, understand the language barriers encountered by these SA interns and explore the resulting language needs. Ultimately, the objective was that the findings of this study could appropriately inform the curriculum design and development of learning Chinese as a second language for vocational purposes.

1.5 Research questions

As mentioned above, this research study aimed to foreground contextualised Chinese language learning needs by examining the language experiences of South Asian undergraduates in their internship work in Hong Kong. The following three research questions guided the whole study:

1. What are the Chinese language learning experiences of South Asian undergraduate students in relation to the educational, political and socio-economic contexts of Hong Kong?
2. What are the language barriers experienced by South Asian undergraduate students during their internships in the local workplace?
3. What are the resulting Chinese language needs of South Asian undergraduate students?

1.6 Organisation of chapters

There are seven chapters in this thesis. Chapter One sets the scene for the study by providing a synopsis of political, linguistic and economic factors that have put the present ethnic minority students in Hong Kong in a difficult position in the education arena. Chapter Two reviews prior research studies, both local and overseas, on ethnic minority students in the areas related to (1) education policies that exacerbate the language problems faced by EMs; (2) low EM participation in university education; (3) language difficulties encountered by EM individuals in the workplace; (4) needs analyses for language curriculum design. Chapter Three outlines the research methodology of the study including the philosophical perspective adopted and the research methods employed. Details on the design and implementation of data collection, management and analysis are explained. Ethical issues are also addressed. Chapters Four, Five and Six present and discuss the findings from the focus group, the interviews and the diary entries of the participants. Implications are also examined. Chapter Seven summarises the key findings of this exploratory study, highlights original contribution to knowledge, and concludes the whole thesis by making recommendations, addressing limitations and proposing areas for further investigation.

Chapter Two – Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter provides a synopsis of the background of the ethnic minorities residing in Hong Kong. It presents historical, political and social aspects of the local context that may have led to present linguistic challenges relating to education and career advancement faced by ethnic minority students, specifically those from South Asian countries. This chapter critically reviews prior research studies on EM students in the areas related to (1) the current education system in Hong Kong that militates against their successful acquisition of Chinese, (2) the resulting mismatch between the Chinese proficiency of EM students and the level of Chinese required for successful integration into the Hong Kong workplace and society, and (3) needs analyses for language curriculum design, in both the local and overseas contexts. The findings of previous literature shape the rationale of this study, identify research gaps, and inform a research framework for the design of the present study. They are important to our understanding of the relationship between language education experiences and the identification of specific language needs that ethnic minority undergraduates might have, in order to help them acquire the skills and knowledge that are necessary for seizing career opportunities and furthering personal advancement in the local settings.

2.2 The problem of “Designated Schools”

Local education for ethnic minorities, particularly in the learning of the Chinese language, has ignited a public and academic debate over the past decade, following the enactment of the Racial Discrimination Ordinance (RDO) in 2009 (Bhowmik and Kennedy, 2012, Unison, 2011). Despite the fact that the RDO is in place to ensure, irrespective of one’s ethnicity, every individual’s equal right of access to 12 years of free education, research studies on EM education have indicated that there exists an immense discrepancy between this rosy ideology and the bleak reality. In the following, reports and studies on the effectiveness of government-initiated educational support measures for EM students are critically reviewed.

In an attempt to assist home-grown EM students in adapting to the local education system and to facilitate their learning of Chinese, the EDB encouraged them to enroll to so-called “designated schools” (20 primary and 10 secondary) from the 2006-2007 to 2012-2013 school years (Unison, 2011). A designated school is allowed, at its own discretion, to opt for offering either the mainstream Chinese subject with a school-based, level-adapted curricula or another language subject such as French for selection by its EM students (Education Bureau, 2012).

However, problems have arisen from the EDB's decentralised curriculum approach. First of all, teachers of these designated schools may not have sufficient knowledge and expertise to develop their own curriculum (Ku et al., 2005, Tsung, 2009b, Tsung, 2009a), leaving most of them to adapt a simplified version of the centralised curriculum which is meant to be studied by native Chinese-speaking students of Hong Kong. Secondly, there is no mention of how and what in the mainstream Chinese language curricula should be simplified nor any samples, pedagogical guidelines, learning objectives or assessment tools provided by the EDB (Unison, 2011, Unison, 2016a). According to a joint research project conducted by Unison and the Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union (2007), frontline teachers report that their EM students have experienced grave difficulties in learning the language content adapted and modified from the mainstream Chinese language syllabus, largely due to the lack of the above-mentioned learning guidelines and apparatus. Research studies also show that the majority of EM students studying in designated schools have found themselves bewildered by the mainstream Chinese language subject (albeit an adapted version of it) and the course expectations to be beyond their level of mastery (Chee, 2018, Loh and Tam, 2016). What remains unclear is how these simplified Chinese courses are constructed and what learning content is selected for teaching. Obviously, requiring EM students to study the same, though simplified, Chinese subject as their ethnic Chinese counterparts is problematic.

This challenging curriculum has driven some of them to despair of learning Chinese, and some to take another language subject as an alternative. A report written by the Education Bureau (2012) indicates that all designated schools have complete autonomy to offer optional language subjects for their own EM student groups. Findings of Gu and Patkin's research (2013) show that some EM students prefer learning foreign languages and cultures other than Chinese, among which French is the most popular one. However, one must question how relevant and useful the study of other foreign languages is for integration into every facet of life in a predominantly Chinese city. Eventually, EM students studying a second language as an alternative to Chinese will face a crippling disadvantage when it comes to further education and career advancement.

Since designated schools are English MOI government-aided schools, they are considered more affordable and L2 learner-friendly among EM families with a lower socio-economic status (Tsung, 2009a). According to Unison (2016a), over 90% of the whole EM student population is clustered in them. Inside some designated schools, EM students are separated from local Hong Kong students, limiting their

opportunities for building mutual respect and enhancing multicultural awareness. The result is *de facto* racial segregation. Concern groups point out that this separatist education approach has created an apartheid school atmosphere, detrimental to not only the socialisation between ethnic minority students and their Chinese-speaking counterparts, but also the former's smooth integration into mainstream society (Unison, 2011, Oxfam Hong Kong, 2016). Further exacerbating the situation, their inability to speak the local language means that some EM students try to avoid interaction with their Chinese-speaking peers at school (Gu and Patkin, 2013).

In response to this criticism, the EDB finally dismantled its designated school structures in the school year of 2013-14. However, the inescapable conclusion is that the EDB's designated school strategy caused unintentional consequences to local EM (or NCS in its all-inclusive term) students and failed to cater to the practical needs of these second language learners of Chinese to live and work in Hong Kong society.

The above raises the question of whether or not the educational limbo experienced by EM secondary school students graduating from these designated schools will be addressed in their tertiary education. The next section focuses on the resulting mismatch between the Chinese proficiency of EM students and the level of Chinese required for successful integration into tertiary institutes, workplaces and Hong Kong society as a whole.

2.3 Low EM participation in university education

As mentioned, ethnic minority students in Hong Kong experienced more obstacles to getting a place in a local university than their Hong Kong Chinese counterparts with the lower school attendance rate for EM students continuing at the tertiary education level. Among those aged between 17 and 24, a relatively small proportion of EM individuals are able to receive post-secondary education. This trend is especially evident in Pakistani, Indonesian, and Nepalese communities, as documented by several independent statistical studies conducted by local NGOs. For every school year, only about 1% of EM academic highflyers (excluding Japanese, Koreans and Whites, who generally enjoy a more privileged position in Hong Kong society) are admitted into a degree programme offered by government-funded universities¹ via the

¹At present, there are 8 public universities funded by the University Grants Committee (UGC) of the Hong Kong SAR Government, namely The University of Hong Kong, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, The City University of Hong Kong, The Hong Kong Baptist University, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, The Lingnan University, and The Education University of Hong Kong. They provide a total of 15,000 first-year-first-degree places for secondary school graduates (Education Bureau 2012).

Joint University Programmes Admission Systems (JUPAS), whereas the admission rate for Chinese-speaking students is 20% (Unison, 2016a, EOC, 2011). Gu and Patkin (2013) reveal that the percentages of Pakistani and Nepalese youths who had completed local university education in 2013 were 4.3% and 7.7% respectively. Unison (2016a) shows that the low percentages mean on average only about 120 EM students are successfully admitted to local degree programmes annually. It should be noted that JUPAS keeps limited data relating to the ethnicity of students who apply to it, thereby hampering data gathering and research in this area. It is therefore difficult to ascertain EM students' 4-year university education attainment solely relying on government data. Unfortunately, there is no concrete figure showing how many EM students have successfully taken this route to local universities, not to mention those who are admitted to self-financing tertiary institutes.

The EDB has pulled out several educational initiatives with a view to reversing the low academic achievements of local EM youths. Starting from the school year of 2008-2009, the EDB has allowed local universities to accept UK-based Chinese examinations offered locally, including the General Certificate of Education (GCE), the International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) and the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE). It also encourages local recognised post-secondary educational institutes to accept the abovementioned alternative qualifications as substitutes for the required public examination result of the Chinese language (Unison, 2011, Education Bureau, 2012). Alternatively, EM students can opt to use any public examination result of a second language subject (e.g. French, German and Spanish) for entering university, but this language qualification is viewed by the university purely as a favourable factor for admission, but not as a pre-requisite (Zhang et al., 2010).

Yet, the rate for ethnic minorities progressing to university is still disappointingly low. NGOs including Unison (2016a) and Oxfam Hong Kong (2016) have started to urge the EDB to consider the feasibility of developing a Chinese language curriculum tailored for non-Chinese speaking students in Hong Kong. In response, the EDB launched the "Chinese Language Curriculum Second Language Learning Framework" in 2014. However, the framework has been criticised as a piecemeal approach as it "lacks concrete guidelines for implementation" and "stage learning objectives" (Unison, 2016a). In the same year, the EDB introduced two Applied Learning Chinese ApL(C) courses with a focus on the use of Chinese in the local services and hospitality industry for secondary four EM students. Although the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (DSE) results of these two courses are

recognised by local tertiary education institutes as an alternative qualification for the Chinese language requirement, this initiative certainly limits EM students' options to work in particular job sectors as it fails to equip them with inclusive vocational Chinese language abilities that are universally applicable. Hence, the enrollment of EM students in these two ApL(C) courses from 2014-15 to 2016-17 has been low and the level attained by them disappointing (Unison, 2016a). Local universities may also exercise their own discretion in deciding whether or not a lower level of Chinese proficiency is acceptable for admission. However, in spite of this discretion, there has been no noticeable growth in the proportion of EM secondary school graduates securing a place in university.

Sadly, EM students face a tremendous difficulty in satisfying the minimum requirement of Chinese abilities for university entrance, and thus their chances of having an enhanced career prospects are dim. Those EM secondary school leavers who fail to enter the local universities yet still wish to receive further education can only resort to lower-level programmes such as higher diplomas or associate degrees offered by non-university institutes. Even then, most of these QF² Level 4 sub-degree programmes contain compulsory Chinese courses that a student must pass as a graduation requirement. Overall, poor Chinese literacy is indubitably the *de facto* reason that has barred EM students from advancing to post-secondary education (Baig, 2012). The language barriers these EM students experience have resulted in their low representation in the local tertiary education arena, suggesting the need for further research on how and in what areas education providers can help this small group of students improve their language abilities.

2.3.1 Barriers encountered by local EMs in the education sphere

In the education discourse, cultural differences may inhibit social participation in a homogenised school environment and even lead to social exclusion of ethnic minorities (Ku et al., 2005). When compared with Mainland new arrivals, EM students in Hong Kong are more likely to encounter socially excluding treatment in a homogenised school, where most local Chinese-speaking students and teachers demonstrate different levels of less-than-inclusive attitudes towards them. In addition to cultural differences, language plays a role in hampering social inclusion. In the school context, the language-based segregation of EM students is predominantly

²The Hong Kong Qualifications Framework (QF) was launched to promote lifelong learning by providing a seven-level hierarchy covering qualifications in the academic, vocational and continuing education sectors. The primary objective of establishing such the qualifications framework is to provide a platform to encourage and facilitate lifelong learning, with a view to enhancing the capability and competitiveness of the workforce in Hong Kong.

ethnic-Chinese mainstream primary and secondary schools has been suggested as another factor affecting social inclusion. For instance, a survey jointly conducted by Unison and the Polytechnic University reports that 43% of the EM high school students (n=200) seldom speak to their Chinese classmates largely due to language barriers (Ku et al., 2005). This is significant since communication among peers underscores a meaningful school life. A similar finding also suggests that poor communicative competence is a major reason preventing SA students from establishing and maintaining friendships with their Chinese-speaking peers and as a result they tend to live in their own circles (Zhang et al., 2010).

This apparent institutional segregation experienced by EM students and exacerbated by language barriers is pervasive and stems from the implementation of the mother tongue teaching policy introduced in 1998 (Shum et al., 2016). It is these prior research findings that have prompted me to explore if a similar phenomenon will be found at the university and the workplace, as these two settings are considered an enclosed social system. If so, one would also need to consider other factors that may shape the need of learning the Chinese language.

2.3.2 EM students' use of a second language during internships

For university education, two types of undergraduate qualifications are commonly awarded: traditional degrees and applied degrees. The former is predominantly theory-focused aiming to broaden students' knowledge base, whereas the latter combines both applied training and theoretical learning aiming to equip students with real-world, hands-on skills and concepts that gear towards their chosen professional career path. With internships (sometimes known as practicums or placements) embedded, applied degree programmes are regarded as a pertinent response to industrial demand for work-ready undergraduates. Compared with those without, university students with relevant internship experiences are favoured by company recruiters and the likelihood of their employment upon graduation is relatively higher (Murray, 2010). However, work placements can involve significant language challenges. International research studies reviewed below show what communication barriers can arise in workplaces and the corresponding language training for equipping L2 students for future employment.

In Myles' qualitative studies on ESL students engaging in a six-month internship programme in the technical workplaces of Canada, she highlights the linguistic challenges facing engineering student interns who do not possess sufficient English proficiency, ranging from failure to spontaneously engage in formal and social

discussions to linguistic-related embarrassment caused by bad accents and poor pronunciation (2009). She also suggests that an effective ESL curriculum should include an appropriate blend of formulaic discourses of professional workplaces (e.g. specialised terminologies and jargons) as well as everyday language (e.g. local idioms and 'bad language').

Another study on students' use of English in their job placement in Thailand is that of Dr Mary Sarawit (2008). She conducted a survey with undergraduate students majoring in Human Resources and Tourism Management. Her findings show that the language skills most frequently used in the services industry are listening and speaking. However, Sarawit's research design was rather simple, merely using a self-designed, scale-rating questionnaire to collect quantitative data and not specifying the types of communication problems the student interns faced in the workplace, nor providing any suggestions as to the areas of improvement for Thai learners of English as a second language.

The last important study reviewed is Dr Neil Murray's on the ESL needs of undergraduate students in Australia. It makes the point that professional degree programmes involving internships are in some cases not conducive to enhancing employability following graduation because from the psychological point of view, non-local student interns who lack sufficient English language skills for effective communication in professional job settings are likely to suffer stress, frustration and even anxiety which can later result in low self-esteem and motivation to learn the home language (2010).

From these prior, quite contextualised, studies on language use in internships, it is apparent that English L2 students may harbour negative feelings when they find their language skills are not on par with local colleagues and supervisors, and may also worry about their inability to secure their graduate employment. As for educational research in Hong Kong, to the researcher's knowledge, no prior local research has touched upon the impact of Hong Kong's ethnic minority undergraduates having to use Chinese as a medium of communication in their internships. While it is logical to assume that they would have the same language problems mentioned in western and Asian literature, it remains unclear what other specific language problems unique to them should also be understood and delineated. Therefore, it would be useful to ascertain if results similar to those obtained in foreign language studies can be replicated locally and if new findings can be produced. The aforementioned studies can serve as good pointers to the current study which investigates the everyday work

experience of SA interns in Hong Kong by collecting circumstantial evidence about their daily use of the Chinese language and the barriers they encounter in the local workplace. Section 2.4 reviews literature on how this Chinese language requirement poses recruitment and employment difficulties to ethnic minority individuals residing in Hong Kong.

2.4 Language difficulties encountered by EM individuals in the workplace

Ethnic minority individuals' abilities to cope with work duties tend to operate in tandem with their language literacy, both oral and in writing. An OECD project finds that linguistic insufficiency can create hurdles for minority employees to progress and excel at work (Froy and Pyne, 2011). In addition, a large body of research literature conducted in the last two decades has documented that language problems are often cited as the greatest difficulty for EM migrants to integrate into the local workplace, e.g. in the United States of America (Deresky, 2000), in Australia (Dagher and D'Netto, 1997), in Singapore (Lim and Alum, 1995), and in mainland China (Lee, 2001). In Europe, too, some EU countries have established and shared best practices regarding vocational language training for minority employees with fruitful results. They report that improving the lingua franca abilities of EM workforces will boost their work effectiveness and efficiency (LILAMA, 2011). Another body of international literature on multi-ethnic and multi-lingual workplaces indicates that new immigrants' inadequate language proficiency often triggers conflicts with their local supervisors which hampers collegiate relationships and social harmony (Loosemore and Lee, 2002, Ogbonna and Harris, 2006, Le, 2018).

In terms of difficulties in recruitment, the issue of insufficient Chinese language abilities has been cited as a major concern in a number of large-scale quantitative surveys focusing on recruitment difficulties faced by ethnic minorities in Hong Kong. One local survey reports that out of the 301 EM secondary students surveyed, 77% consider that the prime reason for them to study Chinese is they will be given favourable consideration during the process of shortlisting (Shum et al., 2011). A very recent investigation project titled *Chinese Language Requirements in the Hong Kong Job Market: A Survey on Job Advertisements* conducted by Unison (2016a) reveals that among the 1,500 job advertisements examined, 49% and 51% clearly state that spoken Cantonese and written Chinese respectively are required. The survey also finds that if a job advertisement is written in Chinese without an accompanying English translation, it is indecipherable to some EM job seekers. Another questionnaire survey conducted by the Polytechnic University and Lady MacLehose Centre reveals that among the 200 Pakistani respondents, the majority think that some

local employers would eliminate them early in the recruitment process because of their lack of Chinese (Ku et al., 2003). In addition, EM youths are not on an equal footing when competing with their native Chinese counterparts for civil service positions, which mostly require a high level of Chinese language proficiency. For example, the attainment of at least Level 1 in the Use of Chinese paper of the Common Recruitment Examination is required for 22+ government posts at degree or professional level. This is mission impossible for the majority of EM students receiving a 12-year public education but sitting for overseas public examinations of Chinese (e.g. GCE, IGCSE and GCSE). Even an A* result from these Chinese exams is only equivalent to local Primary 2 level (Unison, 2016a).

In relation to difficulties that arise during employment, according to the *Hong Kong Poverty Situation Report 2015*, EM individuals, particularly those from Southeast Asia, frequently encounter communication challenges with their local co-workers in the workplace (HKSAR, 2015). The Social Integration Project for Ethnic Minorities conducted by a local university and an NGO reports that over half of the 402 respondents spoke of difficulty in communicating with their Chinese supervisors and co-workers (Kam, 2003). In addition, some anecdotal evidence from domestic research is resonant with overseas research findings concerning language barriers in a multi-ethnic workplace. For instance, South Asian construction workers have encountered different degrees of miscommunication problems stemming from their poor Chinese language skills. In a similar vein, Wong and Lin (2014) observe that EM employees' inadequate Chinese skills sometimes hinder smooth cooperation with their local colleagues and productivity in general. Chan and his colleagues report that although some home-grown SA construction site workers have a basic understanding of Cantonese, a spoken dialect of Hong Kong, many of them do not have sufficient knowledge of written Chinese for textual communication (2014). Of particular concern, miscommunication between minority employees and their local supervisors on work safety is also identified as a major cause of industrial accidents (Ly, 2004).

Effective communication in a multi-ethnic workplace seems to be closely related to L2 proficiency among ethnic minorities in a migrant society. As a result, Unison (2016a) has made a recommendation to the government that the EDB start the ball rolling by supporting post-secondary education institutions to launch CSL programmes that include appropriate curriculums, learning materials and assessment tools, so as to increase local EM young adults' competitiveness in the job market. In fact, ethnic minority students have great potential to be high achievers in the workforce and make up an ever-larger portion of the labour market in Hong Kong,

especially since the city is now facing structural social problems of declining fertility and an ageing population (Census and Statistics Department, 2015).

Both overseas and local research studies reviewed in Sections 2.2 to 2.4 show that insufficient Chinese proficiency is frequently cited as a major hurdle preventing individuals with minority-ethnic origins from successful recruitment and employment. In the context of Hong Kong's education system, the mainstream Chinese language curriculum fails to cater to the diverse language needs that local ethnic minority students have. This has led to the current plight of the EM community in Hong Kong: underrepresentation in tertiary education and overrepresentation in particular unskilled labour sectors. It is therefore of paramount importance to design a Chinese as a second language curriculum that truly accommodates their practical language needs. As such, an investigation of what general and specific language requirements are needed in order to function linguistically in the local workplace environment must be the first step in the process of curriculum development. The next section focuses on needs analyses commonly adopted for the design of a second language curriculum.

2.5 Needs analysis for language curriculum design

The key element of needs analysis (NA) is a set of measures used to solicit information to lay a sound foundation for language curriculum development that aims to cater for the learning needs of a specific group of students. Needs analysis enables curriculum designers to conduct “a systematic collection of and analysis of all subjective and objective information necessary to define and validate defensible curriculum purposes that satisfy the language learning requirements of students within the context of particular institutions that influence the learning and teaching situation” (Brown, 1995). According to Long (2005), the use of NA not only informs an effective course development, but also holds an entire programme accountable.

In the realm of curriculum design for second language (L2) learning, NA is a commonly adopted strategy to devise rationale and criteria for a particular target group of L2 learners (Richards, 2001) and to identify shared elements in a specific language situation as the basis of language teaching (Johns, 1990). However, it has been a tradition for school administrators and policy makers to design language curricula, with front-line teachers implementing them (Tyler, 2013), even though traditional teacher-centered or one-size-fits-all approaches to foreign language education have long been discredited by NA researchers (Doughty, 2015, Howard and Major, 2004, Long, 2005). This may result in a mismatch between how target language learners are expected to function linguistically in the future and what the

school expects them to achieve. Oprandy (1999) metaphorically compares trends in L2 education with those in city planning. From the behaviorism perspective, he thinks that the one-size-fits-all, top-down approach to curriculum design is similar to a common practice of city planning where outside experts are often requested to design for uniformity at the expense of diversity. In response, a revolutionary movement that seeks spaces for diversity has broken through the conservatism of city planning. In city planning nowadays, attention has already turned to residents' needs for a better sense of belonging and security in human-centered cities. This psychological concern, as suggested by Oprandy, is well matched with L2 learners' desire to adapt to a language environment so that they feel safe and accepted.

As a result, an on-going paradigm shift to a more student-centered curriculum has taken place in recent decades, emphasising the avoidance of mismatches between what teachers want to teach and what students want to learn (Nunan, 1988), students' active involvement in the learning process (Heath, 2002), effective acquisition (Nunan, 1988) and an increased motivation for personalised learning (Reilly, 2004). Opinions of students together with other stakeholders have been taken into more consideration in the curriculum decision-making process, while frontline teachers play a negotiating role between curriculum consumers and developers (Helsby et al., 1996, Kagawa, 2007, Markee, 1997). Watanabe, who recommends incorporating needs of different parties concerned (students and their prospective employers) into a language curriculum, advocates that a bottom-up approach permits "a more democratic decision making process rather than a priori goals and objectives set by the administrators" (2006:84). For ethnic minority education, it is especially important to promote the notion of "learner voice" in learning (Nargis and Tikly, 2010). Only when the voices of curriculum consumers are considered, consulted and analysed during the course of curriculum planning, will a curriculum cater for real rather than assumed needs.

2.5.1 Needs analysis for L2 learning

The concept of needs analysis has grown in many different disciplines in education, in particular in teaching and learning a second language. The language needs of L2 learners can be divided according to social, academic, vocational, occupational, professional or other discourse domains. As a result, the field of Language for Specific Purposes (LSP) has emerged with the aim of providing a useful service to domain-specific language teaching and learning, not only affording teachers a systematic approach to implement learner-based curricula, but also equipping students with the tools necessary to enhance their language capacity and the skills required to acquire the kind of subject-matter expertise likely to be applied in future careers.

Needs analysis can be conducted for situation-specific purposes. One noticeable example is that in the history of teaching English as a second language, NA has had an important bearing upon the curriculum developments of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) (Dudley-Evans and St John, 1998, Hutchinson and Waters, 1987, Robinson, 1991). NA is recognised as “a defining feature” for language curriculum design (Flowerdew and Peacock, 2001). A wealth of academic research on ESP and EOP has pointed out that NA is an essential step in (re-)designing a language curriculum, encompassing but not limited to the following five purposes:

1. to investigate what specific language knowledge and skills L2 learners need to effectively function in occupational fields such as aviation (Karimi and Sanavi, 2014), engineering (Sanmugam et al., 2013, Venkatraman and Prema, 2007), information technology (Kaur and Lee, 2006) and medicine (Eggly, 2002);
2. to evaluate if a language course can appropriately and adequately meet the needs of potential and existing L2 students (Rayan, 2007);
3. to identify the training needed to support certain language skills in a particular workplace setting for non-native language speakers, such as in a business setting (Taillefer, 2007), in a health-care setting (Bosher and Smalkoski, 2002) and in the hospitality industry (Jasso-Aguilar, 1999);
4. to narrow the gap between what L2 students are able to do and what they are expected to be able to do (Cowling, 2007, Ramli et al., 2010); and
5. to gather information about the language barriers that a particular group of L2 users are experiencing (Coleman, 1988, Rajprasit et al., 2014).

Recent findings from several overseas NA studies on the workplace English competence of university students show that they lack a distinct understanding of language needs for workplace communication practices; it is therefore vital that university English courses equip students with the linguistic abilities required to fully function in the work environment. For instance, Zaharim et al. (2007) conducted a quantitative survey to collect the perceived needs of 422 high ranking personnel working in the local engineering industry. The survey found that a set of 7 non-technical attributes including communication skills, entrepreneurial spirit, lifelong learning attitude, awareness of contemporary issues, perception of ethical and social responsibilities, team work, and problem solving skills is perceived as most needed by engineer graduates, of which the attribute of communication skills ranks at the top.

Similar findings were also yielded in Talif and Noor (2009) which investigated the workplace linguistic needs of 86 final year university students during their industrial internship and by Bhattacharyya et al. (2009) who surveyed a group of undergraduate students in their 8-month internship programme in various organisations. Attempts to investigate vocational English language needs of university students prior to and during employment have also been made in other Asian countries such as Thailand (Rajprasit et al., 2014) and Taiwan (Spence and Liu, 2013). The above studies suggest that the English language course content should reflect authentic situations in the target workplace so as to relate the learning goals to real-life language use. In addition, these NA researchers all concur that language course designers should endeavour to incorporate authentic linguistic needs in order to fully prepare novice professionals for their transition into the workforce.

The discussion here is so far confined to just English, especially in the ESL setting. Other needs analyses have been conducted for many other languages including Japanese (Iwai et al., 1999, Watanabe, 2006), Korean (Chaudron et al., 2005) and Chinese (Huang, 2014, Sung and Tsai, 2014, Zhang, 2004). Although NA can be applied to curriculum design for all languages, learners of one language (e.g. English) might have distinctive and specific needs which are different from those of another language (e.g. Chinese). Tsung and Cruickshank (2010) point out specifically that teaching Chinese as a second language should not be just a mirror image of teaching English as a second language, and thus language specific issues relating to teaching and learning Chinese should be carefully explored and dealt with.

Chinese for Vocational Purposes (CVP) is a rather new division of Chinese language education worldwide (Tsung and Cruickshank, 2010). Extended from English for Occupational Purposes, CVP also aims to establish interdisciplinary and collaborative practices to cater for the distinct workplace needs of learners of the Chinese language. CVP has thus exhibited a great deal of potential for the tertiary students whose language difficulties and resulting needs tend to be precisely defined in accordance with their occupational and professional orientations. In the Hong Kong context, although there is a growing body of literature centered on Chinese language education for non-Chinese speaking students, not much on CVP for tertiary EM students using needs analysis can be found (Qiu et al., 2014). Below are a few related research studies conducted in recent years.

Sung and Tsai (2014) investigated 65 native American students' needs in relation to learning Chinese as a foreign language in a university in Utah. The significant finding of their investigation was that half the students surveyed indicated the main purpose for them to study Chinese was related to their future career plans. This illuminating result implies that L2 Chinese course developers should identify work-based language areas in order to fulfill vocational language needs perceived by students.

Informed by similar NA research, Huang (2014) surveyed 92 university students in the freshman and sophomore years to explore their needs in relation to learning Chinese as a foreign language in the USA. Results from a questionnaire completed by the students indicated a primary interest in learning speaking and listening skills for interactions with future colleagues and bosses. Meanwhile, Huang also surveyed 8 Chinese language instructors to triangulate the findings, and found that a major discrepancy between teacher and student responses was that the former perceived communicating with Chinese native speakers in restaurants as an important need whereas the latter prioritised using Chinese in other contexts such as the workplace.

Hitherto, no NA research studies have been conducted in relation to how an L2 Chinese curriculum should be developed for ethnic minority undergraduates for a range of professional and occupational contexts in Hong Kong. Therefore, investigation into this neglected area is urgently needed. One of the aims of this research study is to confirm overseas findings that a lack of sufficient Chinese literacy in the local workplace will pose a major hurdle to their job performance and career aspirations.

2.5.2 Needs analysis models

In its infancy, needs analysis was thought of in terms of the acquisition of “discrete language items of grammar and vocabulary” (Songhori, 2008). It was only after the Communicative Needs Processor (CNP) was crafted by Munby (1981) that needs analysis started placing emphasis on the learners themselves, i.e., their communicative needs in the target situation. The main purpose of Munby's CNP is to flesh out as much as possible the profile of linguistic needs of the learners of English for specific purposes in various situations of the target working environment. This approach is also termed Target Situation Analysis (TSA) by Chambers (1980). However, Munby's CNP needs analysis model is not without its critics. West (1994) points out that since the CNP is claimed to be learner-centred, the model should collect data *from* the learners rather than *about* them. Other researchers concur that Munby's model focuses entirely on the perspective of the analyst, while that of the learners and other parties

involved is neglected (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987).

In the 90's, the Present Situation Analysis (PSA) model was posited as a complement to the TSA by some NA researchers including Robinson and Jordan (as cited in Sonhori, 2008), in an attempt to fully understand what learners are like before a curriculum starts to operate. In this proposition, the sources of information are actually the learners themselves. Recently, the realm of ESP has placed an increasing emphasis on the use of PSA, which is widely seen as a reliable indicator of what is needed to facilitate language learning and to fulfill intended learning goals. This model also aligns with the bottom-up curriculum development approach mentioned earlier in Section 2.5. The next section introduces some of the prevailing classifications of needs.

2.5.3 Types of learning needs

As the above literature indicates, needs analysis is an essential process of synthesising and analysing information about learners' authentic needs in a bid to determine realistic learning objectives and develop appropriate content of a language curriculum, but one of the challenges in NA is how to operationalise the entity referred to as a need. There are distinctive perspectives among needs analysts on the meanings and types of language needs. Some view needs as the gap between present language abilities and required language abilities (the discrepancy view); some delineate needs as a change that is desired by various stakeholders (the democratic view); some consider needs as detrimental if absent (the diagnostic view) (Stufflebeam et al., 2012). Major classifications of needs are reviewed below.

Target Needs and Learning Needs

Hutchinson and Waters (1987) divide needs into “*Target Needs*”, i.e. what learners need to do in the target situation, and “*Learning Needs*”, i.e. what learners need to do in order to learn. “*Target Needs*” can be more explicitly divided into three different areas, namely,

1. *Necessities*: what learners have to know in order to function effectively in the target situation (Kaewpet, 2009);
2. *Lacks*: learners' weaknesses (Nation and Macalister, 2009); and
3. *Wants*: what learners wish for or how they view their needs (Nation and Macalister, 2009).

Adopting a learner-centred approach, Tahir (2011) further elucidates Hutchinson and Waters' concept of "*Target Needs*", specifying that "*Target Needs*" should refer to the skills and knowledge fundamental for the learner to function in the target situation. This views the learner as the central element in the whole learning process, which aligns with the philosophical underpinning of the Present Situation Analysis model. Analysis based on "*Target Needs*" is becoming more prevalent in L2 curriculum development.

Subjective Needs and Objective Needs

In discussing types of needs, Robinson (1991) and Brindley (1984) both agree that "*Subjective Needs*" and "*Objective Needs*" should be taken into account when developing a curriculum. Graves (1996) interprets "*Subjective Needs*" as affective and cognitive factors derived from personal elements, such as individual learning aspirations, styles and preferences, whereas "*Objective Needs*" stem from factual information about the learner including education background and the level of language proficiency. It is not difficult to see that "*Subjective Needs*" align closely with "*Wants*", while "*Objective Needs*" correspond to "*Necessities*" and "*Lacks*".

Felt Needs and Perceived Needs

Looking at the issue from insider/outsider perspectives, Berwick and Johnson (1989) distinguish Brindley's "*Subjective Needs*" and "*Objective Needs*" respectively as "*Felt Needs*" and "*Perceived Needs*". In their view, "*Felt Needs*" are the assumptions, thoughts, and affective feelings of the learner as an insider, while "*Perceived Needs*" are the normative opinions of educators as outsiders about the language gap between the learner and the real environment. To benchmark against the "*Target Needs*" of Hutchinson and Waters, "*Necessities*" and "*Lacks*" can be perceived by the outsider, and "*Wants*" can be felt by the insider.

Situation Needs and Language Needs

Brown describes his theory as "a dichotomy of *Situation Needs* and *Language Needs*" (1995:40), with the former referring to human learning processes in social, physical and psychological contexts, and the latter denoting the linguistic competence that should be possessed by the learner of the target language. This resembles the classification of needs by Hutchinson and Waters.

Situational Needs and Communicative Needs

Another classification of language needs is “*Communicative Needs*” and “*Situational Needs*” (Richards, 2001). “*Communicative Needs*” refer to the learner’s needs in the place and setting where the learner will use the target language, the communicative tasks which the learner is required to perform, and the expected level of language proficiency that the learner should have. “*Situational Needs*” are considered according to a set of parameters for language curriculum design that includes the objectives, expectations, styles and prior proficiency level of the learner (Richards, 2001). Richards’ definition of “*Communicative Needs*” and Hutchinson and Waters’ definition of “*Target Needs*” overlap partially as both emphasise the learner’s needs arising from specific, real-life situations. The major difference between Richards’ “*Communicative Needs*” and Hutchinson and Waters’ “*Target Needs*” is that while “*Communicative Needs*” focus directly on language necessities in a specific situation, “*Target Needs*” compare the required language abilities for functioning in a specific situation with the existing language proficiency of the learner in order to realistically delineate the discrepancy between the target and present situation.

However defined, all the above needs typologies share similarities in terms of educational perspectives, goals and ideology, although each uses a different name. Therefore, an exploratory framework has been created by synthesizing and adapting existing theoretical frameworks of needs analysis to fit the unique circumstances this study deals with. Adopting the bottom-up PSA needs analysis model, my research study seeks to connect the three areas (*Necessities*, *Lacks* and *Wants*) in respect to the notion of “*Target Needs*” from the perspectives of multiple stakeholders, i.e., students, colleagues and teachers.

2.6 Chapter conclusion

The above literature review and research findings have significant implications for the language education of ethnic minority individuals residing in Hong Kong. Given that it is a predominantly Chinese-speaking city, language barriers hinder the overall education experience and contribute to the reduced academic and career prospects of ethnic minority students in Hong Kong. Without a solid mastery of the Chinese language, it is difficult for them to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to function effectively in the local workplace, in their everyday life and in the society as a whole. The local mainstream Chinese curriculum under the existing education system does not cater to the distinctive language needs of ethnic minority students. What is lacking is an effective and coherent curriculum of studying Chinese as a second/foreign language that enables them to participate meaningfully in Hong Kong

society. This leaves them not only unable to communicate well, but also deprives them of equal opportunity in a range of spheres including education and employment. This necessitates thoughtful planning of a language curriculum that addresses their real linguistic needs and allows them to achieve a level of functional competency which is competitive with that of their local counterparts for studying and working and to earn an academic qualification in Chinese equally recognised by local education institutes and employers.

The concept of needs analysis in education refers to the processes involved in gathering information about the learning needs of a particular group of learners. In language programmes, needs analysis focuses on the learning needs of students, and once they are identified, they can be translated into learning objectives, which in turn serve as a basis for further development of teaching areas, learning materials and activities, assessment methods, programme evaluation strategies, etc. Hence, conducting needs analysis is the very first step in curriculum design and development. Hutchison and Waters (1987) suggest that needs analysis should aim to find out what learners need to do in the target situation. Their model is learner-oriented, treating learners as the central element in the whole learning progress, taking a bottom-up approach to collect information from the rather than about learners, and making curriculum development a more democratic decision-making activity that caters for real rather than assumed needs. In keeping with Hutchison and Waters' notion, I often see learners as good judges of their own needs because they know best what they can and cannot do with the target language and, after the experiences of their internships, what language skills are essential to function in the target language environment. Hutchison and Waters' needs analysis model therefore aligns closely with the major aim of my research, i.e., to understand the Chinese language learning needs of South Asian tertiary students arising from their first-hand internship practice in the predominantly Chinese workplace of Hong Kong so as to design a Chinese as a second language curriculum for vocational purposes.

The next chapter will explain the methodology of the present research study, including data collection instruments, a detailed description of the respondents selected, research design and procedures, and ethical concerns.

Chapter Three – Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

As the title “Chinese Language Needs of South Asian Undergraduates: A Case Study in a Self-financing Vocational Institute in Hong Kong” indicates, this research study is concerned with the Chinese language problems encountered by SA tertiary students during their internships in local job settings. Its major aim is to understand and identify their needs for and perceptions towards using Chinese in the local workplace so as to inform the design of an effective vocational curriculum for learning Chinese as a second language.

This methodology chapter is organised into two major sessions. The first section outlines the philosophical underpinnings of this research, i.e. how it lends itself to the interpretivist paradigm using a qualitative approach. The second section presents an overview of the methodological framework of this study including the design, methods of data collection and analysis, descriptions of the research site and the selected respondents, issues of research standards, and ethical considerations.

3.2 Philosophical perspectives on educational research and needs analyses

As Creswell (2013) suggests that every research endeavour involves three interconnected perspectives: (1) *Ontology* – How the researcher views the nature of being, the reality and the world; (2) *Epistemology* – How the researcher acquires knowledge; and (3) *Methodology* – How the researcher devices instruments to collect meaningful data based upon the ontological and epistemological assumptions s/he has. When these three interrelated perspectives are combined together, a theoretical research framework will be set to gain a holistic view to understand knowledge. This philosophical framework is known as “paradigm”, first termed by Thomas Kuhn (1972). Since different people look at the world differently across place, time and culture, it is important for researchers to clearly understand which philosophical underpinning is best for uncovering knowledge existing in the world.

Conventionally, two distinct paradigms, *Positivism* and *Interpretivism*, are commonly adopted in educational research (Bassey, 1990, Usher et al., 1996). Positivism assumes that truth or knowledge can be uncovered through robust scientific, systemic and logical investigations where positivist researchers should maintain an objective and value-free stance, and thus affirm that the existence of a reality is external to and independent of social actors; in contrast, Interpretivism believes that truth or knowledge is co-constructed by multiple individuals and shaped by their diverse

perspectives encompassing social, cultural and historical factors, and therefore interpretivist researchers defend that social actors have an active and crucial role to play in the construction, re-construction and de-construction of social reality(-ies) where they live, and that the underlying meanings of human behaviours and social phenomena can be understood and interpreted through the use of a subjective, value-laden lens (Carr, 1995, Usher et al., 1996, Bassey, 1999, Merriam, 1998, Maxwell, 2012).

Besides, *Positivism* and *Interpretivism* are also methodologically distinct. *Positivism* takes a quantitative approach using tools such as scientific experiments and questionnaires to generate hard data (numbers and statistics) for making empirical and generalisable claims, whereas *Interpretivism* takes a qualitative approach employing tools such as observations and interviews to produce illuminating and transferrable findings (words of participants in quotes and themes) (Briggs et al., 2012, Creswell, 2013, Punch and Oancea, 2014).

Needs analysis has a long tradition in the development of foreign language curricula (Brown, 2009). Indeed, a methodologically well thought-out NA is crucial to identify what target students precisely need to learn in order to successfully function on a daily basis in a field-specific situation. This prompts a methodological question as to which approach that can best suit NA research: quantitative or qualitative. Each approach has its own strengths which influence a researcher's choice of methodology. NAs are generally qualitative in nature because they aim to explore and interpret what the needs of learners are. Brown (2009) recognises that in the last decade, many NA studies lent themselves to qualitative rather than quantitative methodology. Some examples which openly applied the qualitative approach include Hoekje (2007), Sešek (2007), Kaewpet (2009), Lockwood (2012) and Evans (2010). In a recent methodological survey conducted by Serafini et al. (2015), 15 out of 23 NA studies under review were in favour of a mixed-methods research design with the use of a questionnaire survey as a common quantitative instrument, but careful scrutiny revealed that a lot of the interpretations concerned were indeed qualitative in nature and that the questions set in the questionnaire embedded the researcher's perceptions of what language skills were needed and what not. Therefore, it is generally admitted that research studies involving needs analysis are predominantly qualitative in methodological design.

To avoid the incomplete nature of one single perspective in NA studies, Long (2005) emphasises the benefits of using a triangulation approach for research methods and

data sources. Miles and Huberman (1984) observe that “triangulation is a way to get the finding in the first place – by seeing or hearing multiple instances of it from different sources by using different methods and by squaring the finding with others it needs to be squared with” (p.267). Brown (1995) supports that information essential for designing an appropriate curriculum should not be extracted by one single method and from one single source. In view of this, Long (2005) recommends the “source x method interactions” to help triangulate the reliability and validity of the data collected. Section 3.5 will present the triangulation methods adopted in my research in an attempt to improve methodological rigor as well as to increase collective confidence in my NA findings.

The interpretivist paradigm aims at understanding lived perceptions and reflections in real-world situations (Yin, 2013). Creswell (2013) further explains that using a qualitative approach allows the researcher to make sense of real-life experiences and interpret the associated meanings that individuals have brought to them. In keeping with Yin and Creswell, this philosophical perspective therefore matches the purpose of my research study, i.e., to seek understanding of the subjective Chinese language needs arisen from SA undergraduate students’ internship experiences in the workplaces of Hong Kong. As a Chinese language teacher, I am sympathetic to the education limbo caught by SA youths and always try to find a way to help them; as the researcher of this study, I wish to penetrate their language experiences, understand their language barriers, and explore how they construct their language needs.

In making sense of sense-making human beings, the interpretations produced can never be entirely free from the interpreter’s biases and prejudices. Hence, in order to address the unresolved dilemma of the subjective nature of any interpretivist research, it is important for the researcher to make an effort to recognise and constrain biases. In this qualitative research posited within the interpretivist paradigm, I have acknowledged my positionality as a language educator who is passionate about helping underachieving ethnic minority students residing in Hong Kong. This will help to inform readers who may sense that some of my interpretations that have been coloured by my predisposition. Further, to avoid sliding towards extreme subjectivity that could colour this study with an impression of unreliability and untrustworthiness, I have taken some measures to discipline myself, constrain my biases, and add richness to my interpretative accounts. These measures include (1) member checking; (2) providing extensive and detailed description; (3) setting up an audit trail to make the research methods and procedures more explicit and transparent, and (4) triangulating data against different data sources.

3.3 Research Methods

3.3.1 Case study

Case study is regarded as one of the qualitative research strategies used in an empirical inquiry where the researcher can explore and investigate a contemporary phenomenon in depth, in order to understand collective meanings of individual behaviours in a particular real-life social setting (Merriam, 1998). In Creswell's notion, a case study aims not only "to portray, analyse and interpret the uniqueness of the real individuals and situations through accessible accounts", but also "to catch the complexity and situatedness of behaviours" (2013, p.129). Yin (2013) further puts that bounded by time and place, a case study research specifically dives into the social events that are experienced by individuals and captures how the reality co-constructed by them and what factors are at play during the construction of that reality. There are a variety of academic fields from law and medicine to business and communication that use case studies. In second language education, a case study researcher seeks to probe specific language activities in which individual learners are situated so as to portray a holistic picture of the language experiences they live, undergo and feel about (Mackey and Gass, 2016).

Case study was considered appropriate under the qualitative approach within the interpretivist paradigm because the present research focused on the discovery and description of SA tertiary students' workplace experiences and interpretations of their language needs. The adoption of case study approach allowed me to exemplify one specific group of social actors in one bounded real-life setting. The case being investigated was THEi undergraduate SA students' (social actors) language barriers in the workplaces of Hong Kong (setting). The aim of using a case study was to bring a thick and rich contextualised understanding that CSL curriculum designers would find practical and relevant to their own contexts. Below outlines other methods of data collection employed in this qualitative case study.

3.3.2 Documentary analysis

A good way to understand the totality of the context in the pre-research stage is through reading and examining documents in which social realities have been captured, recorded and presented in a textual form (Benaquisto and Given, 2008). In order to gain a holistic understanding of the living and education experiences of SA students in Hong Kong, relevant documents such as legal papers drafted by non-governmental organisations, consultation reports prepared by concern groups, policy statements and statistical records from the government, and newspaper articles were integrated into this qualitative analysis as a supplementary dataset.

3.3.3 Focus group

Focus group is a qualitative method commonly used in exploratory research to discover and understand perspectives of social actors (Morgan, 1996, Hoppe et al., 1995, Creswell, 2013, Krueger, 2014). It is a guided, focused discussion on a set of questions/topics among a small group of participants with similar characteristics. Curry and his fellow researchers (2009) state that compared with one-on-one individual interviews, focus group discussions are helpful in several ways. First, interaction among participants can help widen the range of individual responses on a shared experience. Second, group dynamics can activate forgotten details. For example, hearing someone recounting a personal story may trigger one's memory of his/her own past experience. Last, group exchanges can help release inhibitions making some participants feel more comfortable when describing their lived experiences of a particular social phenomenon. In terms of the group size, the ideal number is between five and eight per session, because for a group fewer than five participants, the dynamics is flattened and thus there might not be enough momentum for exchanges on a given issue, whereas for a group more than eight participants, it might be rather difficult for the moderator to keep the discussion flowing smoothly and for each participant to have sufficient time to express on their views, both substantially and substantively (Morgan, 2001, Greenbaum, 1998). As no relevant empirical studies reviewed in Chapter Two have clearly indicated that gender balance is considered to be an important variable in adult L2 acquisition, in particular the Chinese language, it was unnecessary to elicit a gender-balanced view for this research.

With all these considerations in mind, I held two separate focus group discussions with a total of eleven SA students who newly enrolled in THEi's degree programmes (either year one or year three entry) and had not yet started the internship engagement of their corresponding majors (by the end of September, 2017). The purpose was (1) to understand their views towards the learning of the Chinese language at primary and secondary education levels, (2) to examine if there was any change of views regarding learning Chinese after they had progressed to tertiary education, and (3) to understand their experiences of using Chinese in the classroom and other learning environments at school and their attitudes towards the use of Chinese in their future workplaces. It helped me not only discover interesting and disparate perspectives, but also weed out any false assumptions and prejudices I had previously held.

The eleven SA students successfully recruited were divided into two small groups with one having six of them and the other five. Each focus group session lasted for around 60 minutes in a normal classroom where the environment was familiar. Light refreshments were served in an attempt to create a welcoming and comfortable atmosphere. It appeared that all of the participants were pleased to meet and chit-chatted with one another.

Before the discussion began, I reminded myself as well as the group that there were no “right or wrong answers” and “true or false opinions”, and that I appreciated genuine and honest responses. I also sought participants’ permission to audio-tape their conversations. During the discussion, I concentrated on their speaking without jotting any notes down because I would want to create a sense of relaxing and informal atmosphere to allow free flow of dialogues among them. I took server roles in the focus group discussion: a facilitator who led verbal exchanges among participants; a monitor who adjusted the time, pace and atmosphere; and a moderator who provided stimulation and encouragement for quiet participants as well as control dominating ones. Meanwhile, I also maintained eye contact with them and observed the subtle nuances of expressions and non-verbal signs including body language, facial expressions and vocal cues. As soon as the focus group sessions ended and before my memory slipped away quickly, I noted down my observations and feelings immediately.

3.3.4 Diary-interview method

Although observation is commonly used in qualitative research studies, temporal and physical constraints prevented me to undertake close observation on workplace language use by SA interns in their day-to-day work schedules. Because of safety issues and privacy concerns, it was also impossible for me to gain access to their workplaces including offices, restaurants, kitchens, construction sites, hospitals and sports fields. Furthermore, it was unreasonable for me to stay on their tails every moment of their working hours. They might feel uneasy and embarrassed being watched and as a result the performance of their job duties adversely affected. Therefore, using observation would pose difficulties and constraints (e.g. time and place) in garnering qualitative data for this research. Using the diary as a data collection instrument could compensate the deficiencies of observation because it brings the researcher to the places which are not easily accessible.

Diary is a log of activities and behaviours recorded by individuals. Alaszewski states that the diary method “can be used not only to identify patterns of behaviour but also

to provide greater insight into how individuals interpret situations and ascribe meanings to actions and events” (2006:37). Therefore, the diary method is considered as another effective, yet more convenient, way to collect real-time, real-life experiences of the participants being researched (Meier et al. 2016; Travers 2011; Zou 2007). To ensure that the data collected through diaries is of quality and reliability, there is a number of behind-the-scene measures that the researcher need to take. Such the measures include a pilot, training and guidelines given for diarists, and a debriefing interview with them.

As part of good research practice, a diary pilot study was conducted allowing me to practise and experiment with the tool itself as well as to examine, modify and refine the actual implementation. A detailed description of the pilot stage is provided in Section 3.6.

Six SA students were recruited to participate in this data collection stage using the dairy method (for sampling criteria, refer to Section 3.4.4). They had their internship engagements in the summer months of 2017. To ensure a low dropout rate, these participating students were allowed to submit their diary entries anytime during the day through various communication channels (e.g. Email, WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger or Line) in either written or audio formats, as informed by the pilot study. I employed Alaszewski’s diary-interview method involving four sequential stages, as follows:

First Stage: Pre-diary training for the diarists

A pre-diary training session was held for each of the six diarists. During the session, I explained the purpose of my research, showed them a template of the diary record sheet I designed, and gave them instructions and guidelines on how to complete a dairy record. The table below shows the items being highlighted in the training session.

Item	Expectation
What to write	write as many details as possible
Use of language	Language (style, grammar and spelling) does not matter
In what format	written or audio
When to write	during the break time, after leaving work, or whenever memory is still fresh
How to submit	hard copies: by hand or by post soft copies: via Email, WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger or Line

Second Stage: Diary writing and collecting

Each of the six diarists was encouraged to write at least one diary entry on every internship day across the entire internship period (starting from July to August in 2017). They submitted their entries using one of the recommended ways aforementioned. As soon as I received their entries, I archived the written ones and transcribed the audio ones to prepare for subsequent weekly discussions with them.

Third Stage: Post-diary debriefing

In this stage, a post-diary debriefing with each of the diarists was held on a weekly basis, lasting for 30-45 minutes in a normal classroom. Again, discussions were audio-taped with permission granted by the diarists. Entries previously submitted were evaluated by the student intern and the researcher together. Corrections and clarifications were made in a timely fashion. The post-diary debriefing stage enabled me to visualise the actual workplace experiences they went through and to conceptualise their meanings. Meanwhile, I encouraged them to focus on similar encounters, if any, more specifically in the following work week. Besides, the meetings provided a good opportunity for me to show my gratitude to the efforts and time the diarists had spent. This kept them motivated and engaged.

Final stage: Follow-up interview

Finally, I conducted individual, in-depth interviews with the diarists after they had finished their whole internship programmes. The interviews, audio-taped and lasting for 60-90 minutes, were diary-focused that all the entries and corresponding transcripts were discussed in great detail so as to obtain a deeper and fuller understanding of the language barriers associated with the use of Chinese in daily local workplace settings and the resulting needs. During the course of interview, I kept reminding myself to use appropriate paralinguistic expressions such as tone and pitch of voice, speech modulation, facial expressions, hand gestures and the like, in an attempt to enhance effective communication. Further, I gave special attention to the suggestions made by Arksey and Knight (1999) when devising interview questions. I also referred to Punch and Oancea's interview guide when conducting interviews (2014).

On a final note to conclude this section, it is in the nature of qualitative research that it can arrive at a deep and rich understanding of how the world is viewed by individuals. Figuratively speaking, doing qualitative research is similar to playing a puzzle game where the player (the qualitative researcher) collects different pieces (realities) and organises them in a logically connected way to reveal a pattern (interpretations), in his

or her endeavour to attain a possible solution to complete the puzzle (social phenomena).

3.4 Research sample and sampling

3.4.1 The tertiary institute

The case being studied was the Technological and Higher Education Institute of Hong Kong (THEi), which is a self-financing vocational post-secondary institution founded by the Vocational Training Council (VTC) in 2012. With its mission of producing work-ready graduates, THEi offers 22 degree programmes that are vocationally and professionally oriented and developed with significant industry input. All the programmes from three faculties, namely Faculty of Science & Technology (FST), Faculty of Management & Hospitality (FMH) and Faculty of Design & Environment (FDE), emphasise a work-integrated learning component as a mandatory requirement for graduation, i.e. students must fulfil at least 400 hours of internship throughout a 4-year study period. THEi's language policy stipulates that English is the MOI for all modules except Chinese-related ones (see Appendix 2: THEi's Academic Policy on Degree Structure and Requirements). THEi accepts both local and international students. Normally, home-grown ethnic minority students are treated as international students who are waived from studying all the compulsory Chinese language courses (see Appendix 3: THEi's Academic Policy on Local Qualifications: Standard Entry Route).

3.4.2 The researcher

I have had 14 years of experience in teaching the Chinese language (Cantonese and Putonghua) to both local and non-local students at tertiary level in Hong Kong. In terms of pedagogy, I take a student-centred approach using the constructivist method in my teaching where my students work in groups and learn in an interactive, dynamic environment. My passion for helping local ethnic minority students can be traced back to 2008 when I was assigned to offer additional language assistance to Jeffery Andrew from India and Ansah Malik from Pakistan, who were associate degree students and later have successfully become first registered social workers in Hong Kong. I joined THEi in 2013 and have worked as Teaching Fellow I responsible for teaching *Chinese 1* and *Chinese 2*, two compulsory Chinese language modules offered by the School of General Education and Languages. Over the past 6 years, I have also served as the Module Convenor of *Chinese 1* and the Deputy Module Convenor of *Chinese 2*, responsible for handling module exemption applications of international students, most of them are South Asians either born locally or raised in Hong Kong since a very young age.

In a few occasions where newly admitted SA students were referred to me by their respective programme leaders, some of them expressed their interest in taking Chinese language modules. However, I had to explain to them that they were treated as international students and thus incapable of and ineligible for taking these Chinese language courses originally designed for native speakers of Chinese who had attained an L3 or above result in the DSE Chinese Language examination. According to the language policy stipulated in THEi's student handbook, this was in fact a mandatory exemption. Unlike international students who came to Hong Kong to further their studies and were likely to fly back to their homes upon completion, these home-grown SA students at THEi planned to start their careers locally, just like what their local counterparts would normally do after finishing their undergraduate studies.

If the mission of THEi is to truly produce “work-ready” graduates for the local job market, why then would the institute exempt its SA students from taking the Chinese language courses? In fact, it is undeniably important and essential for THEi to provide sufficient Chinese language training for its NCS students so that they could be vocationally prepared to join the local workforce upon graduation. There is clearly a mismatch between practice and goal. It is this apparent mismatch, if not disparity, that has prompted me to embark on this exploratory research on the investigation of the Chinese language learning needs THEi's SA undergraduates have, aiming to inform the design of an effective vocational curriculum for learning Chinese as a second language.

3.4.3 The research participants

This research started in the Academic Year of 2016-2017, during which there were 36 South Asian students enrolled in THEi. The table below shows the demographic distribution of ethnic minority students enrolled in THEi at that time.

Ethnicity	Number
Indian	6
Nepalese	11
Pakistani	5
Filipino	8
Malaysian	7
Indonesian	3
Vietnamese	1
Thai	1
Total:	42

This set the sample frame of the present research. In the end, eleven SA students for the focus group stage and six for the diary-interview stage were successfully recruited. For triangulation, six different individuals were invited for in-depth face-to-face semi-structured interviews. The table below lists the basic personal information of the informants.

No.	Focus Group	Diary Method	Triangulation Interview
1.	Student S, majoring in public relations	Nigel, majoring in health care	Dr Lee, Programme Leader
2.	Student G, majoring in fashion design	Mike, majoring in sports	Mr Leung, Internship Coordinator
3.	Student E, majoring in public relations	Kurt, majoring in engineering	Dr Choi, Year Tutor
4.	Student M, majoring in public relations	Anjali, majoring in accounting	Mr Yu, Intern from another institution
5.	Student P, majoring in fashion design	Bu, majoring in culinary arts	Ms Lo, Language Consultant
6.	Student R, majoring in culinary arts	Saman, majoring in public relations	Ms Cheung, Accounts Manager
7.	Student B, majoring in culinary arts		
8.	Student D, majoring in hotel operations		
9.	Student I, majoring in health care		
10.	Student Z, majoring in accounting		
11.	Student N, majoring in health care		

Bio-data and personal profiles of all the participants in this research are shown in Appendix 9. The next section discusses the sampling procedures and criteria devised for this study.

3.4.4 Sampling

Contrary to random selection, purposive sampling is dependent on whether or not the researcher judges a particular group of potential participants fit for his/her research (Babbie, 2013). Yin (2013) states that the use of purposive sampling is common and advantageous for a case study design. Patton points out that with samples purposively chosen, “common patterns that emerge from great variation are of particular interest and value in capturing the core experiences and central, shared dimensions of a setting or phenomenon” (2014:235). Therefore, I adopted the purposive sampling technique to recruit SA students of THEi for my research. They initially identified via the Registry’s course enrollment system. Below were the pre-established criteria I had set for accessing target participants:

1. THEi’s SA undergraduate students who received local education but took overseas public examinations as alternative Chinese qualifications for university admission;
2. They saw Chinese as their second language; and
3. Upon graduation, they wished to join the local workforce and had no intention to leave Hong Kong.

The actual number of participants was not decided in the beginning stage because the quality of evidence to support my qualitative inquiry was not dependent on the number of participants but rather their adequate responses. Therefore, when saturation was reached, i.e. when I was convinced that my dataset no longer held new answers to my research questions, as evidenced by the same or similar recurrent or repetitive code pattern, I could finally stop collecting new data. At the end, 54 diary entries were collected and 19 follow-up interviews were conducted. Details are shown in the table below.

Diarists	Number of Diary Entries Submitted	Number of Follow-up Interviews Conducted
Nigel, a healthcare student	9	3
Mike, a sports therapist student	7	3
Kurt, an environmental engineering student	12	4
Anjali, an accounting student	8	3
Bu, a culinary arts student	8	3
Saman, a public relations student	10	3
Total:	<u>54</u>	<u>19</u>

3.5 Triangulation

Very often, the identification of needs is subjective. Vandermeeren holds that “researchers, too, have attitudes concerning language needs, which inevitably influence their choice of research objectives and their interpretation of the findings” (2005:161). Data collected solely from learners’ points of views may not be sufficient for designing a comprehensive language curriculum. Since subjective needs are both retrospective and introspective, they ought to be cross-referenced against multiple information sources. In order for enhancing objectivity, perspectives from various stakeholders should be sought. As such, needs from two source groups were elicited: (1) audience group consisting of students who are directly affected by the NA results and (2) target group such as programme leaders, internship coordinators, employers, supervisors and peer colleagues who are able to provide firsthand experiential information about the audience group to substantiate the NA results. Source triangulation was applied in this study with an aim to maximise credibility and achieve a true sense of the real language needs of the local occupation settings that the learners might not have even been aware of. Different biases were also eliminated.

Simply using multiple sources might not be enough to guarantee that the qualitative findings of an NA study are dependable and credible. Therefore, use of different data collection methods is encouraged when collecting a matrix of complicated language needs as well as for validating the truthfulness of data (Brown, 2009, Long, 2005). For the case under investigation, the following data collection methods were employed to capture all available data: focus groups, dairies and semi-structured interviews. Triangulating different data sources was done in order to eliminate the researcher’s bias and explain the richness and complexity of the situation. To this end, six semi-structured interviews with internship coordinators, programme leaders, industrial employers and co-workers were conducted to collect their views. Each interview was arranged at their convenience in terms of time and venue, lasted for 30-45 minutes, and was audio-taped with the consent granted by each interviewee. A brief profile of interviewees for triangulation is tabulated in Appendix 9.

3.6 Piloting

As part of good research practice, a pilot study of using the diary method involving a SA student intern at THEi was conducted across a period of two weeks in the semester break of the Academic Year of 2017-18. The SA intern was requested to keep a self-report diary by logging specific information on the language activities and usage during work, and send the diary to the researcher’s school email at the end of every internship day. The completion of a trail run enabled the researcher to understand the actual implementation and operation of this research method design.

Necessary adjustments and modifications were made accordingly and described as follows.

Provide a diary-writing guide and training

In the pilot stage, the SA intern was requested to write a time-based entry on every internship day. Because of no training given to the diarist, the researcher found that in the very beginning, the diarist tended to make either some humdrum chronological entries or overgeneralised language encounters. For improvement, a pre-diary training was deemed necessary. During the training, instructions and guidelines as to what to write and how to write would be given to the recruited diarists. In addition, besides time-based entries, event-based entries were also welcome so as to capture any snippets of language activities as they occurred in the workplaces.

Design a user-friendly diary format

No template was given to the participating diarist. In order to ensure the collection of quality data entries, a structured diary template with some short and simple guiding questions was provided. Samples of dairy entries can be found in Appendix 4 for reference. In addition, SA interns were constantly reminded not to worry too much about the accuracy of their language and grammar as it was not an assignment and would only be read by the researcher.

Give regular reminders

To ensure a low drop-out rate, verbal and written reminders would be given to every diarist on a periodic basis to encourage them to write and if necessary, to offer timely and additional assistance.

Allow different submission channels

In the pilot stage, diaries were submitted via school emails. Writing diaries for four to eight weeks could be a very demanding task for university students in Hong Kong who usually have a packed study and personal schedule. When the use of social media is so popular this day and age, types of submission channels would expand to include WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger and Line, in addition to school emails. To allow even more convenience, voice recordings were also welcome for any sudden language issues relevant to the use of Chinese language at the local workplace.

Organise follow-up diary meetings

The researcher was made aware that it was necessary to organise post-dairy meetings with the diarists to discuss their submitted logs. Probing questions would be asked to

uncover specific insights or to obtain deeper understandings to complete the story. If needed, clarifications could also be made in the meetings.

The implementation of a pilot exercise proved to be useful as the subsequent diary approach was conducted smoothly and effectively, facilitating the collection of quality data. In short, the following table summarises the adjustments and modifications made after the pilot stage.

Items	Pilot	Adjustments/Modifications
1. Type of diary	only time-based entries	both time-based and event-based entries
2. Format	free-style	an electronic template in a grid-layout and instructions
3. Submission channel	via emails	WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger and Line
4. Form	written	both written and audio records
5. Reminder	irregular	daily
6. Checkup meeting	nil	on a weekly basis

3.7 Data analysis

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), where it comes to qualitative data analysis, the goal of the researcher is to find

“the best means to make sense of the data in ways that will facilitate the continuing unfolding of the inquiry, and, second, leads to a maximal understanding (in the sense of *Verstehen*) of phenomena being studies. (p.224) ”

In doing so, content analysis aims to identify patterned meanings within a set of textual data, and via coding, the data collected are organised into manageable segments for thematic categorisation (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Before engaging with the whole dataset and making sense of it, I read and re-read all the diaries and transcripts thoroughly and carefully, one-by-one and line-by-line, in order to be fully familiar with the texts. Then, I fed all the textual materials into the qualitative data analysis computer software called NVivo for subsequent content analysis. I referenced to Attride-Stirling’s model of thematic networks where qualitative data was sorted into a hierarchy of three thematic levels: basic themes, organising themes and global themes (2001). In Attride-Stirling words, using the thematic network analysis technique allows qualitative researchers to “unearth the themes salient in a text at different levels, and ... [to] facilitate the structuring and depiction of these themes” (2001:387).

Attride-Stirling's hierarchy of three thematic levels (Global Themes > Organising Themes > Basic Themes) was adopted to accommodate and organise all perspectives extracted during qualitative data analysis. For deriving basic themes, a hybrid technique of inductive and deductive coding was employed. Before commencing an in-depth textual analysis, I used a deductive approach to devise a start list consisting of a priori codes that were drawn from the existing literature on second language use in the workplace and the common learning difficulties of the Chinese language experienced by ethnic minority students in Hong Kong as discussed in Chapter Two. For example, some a priori codes inspired by past research in the area included "oral interactions" (Sarawit, 2008; Unison, 2016a), "jargon" (Myles, 2009), "language anxiety" (Murray, 2010) and "mispronunciation" (Myles, 2009). This list provided a useful lens for me to identify whether the recorded language moments were relevant to my research questions. Other codes such as syntactic structures (LILAMA, 2011) and rhetorical expressions (Le, 2018) were available in the literature but they were considered to be unsuitable for use in the Hong Kong context due to cultural and linguistic differences. In addition to using a deductive technique, I also engaged in inductive coding for any emerging patterns grounded in the qualitative data itself. In other words, for the initial stage of data analysis, I began segmenting the textual material with reference to a list of pre-set codes while at the same time developing new codes. During the coding process, I strove to keep all the codes relatively short and sustainable. These deductive and inductive codes became the basic themes, the lower order in Attride-Stirling's hierarchy (see the third column of the table in Appendix 5).

For the second stage of data analysis, I connected relevant codes to discover more abstract and underlying principles. When a cluster of relevant codes, or basic themes, was discovered by enumeration or a search for relationships, I refined my analysis by merging and grouping these codes to form an overarching thematic category, which is called an organising theme, the middle order in Attride-Stirling's hierarchy. After that, I checked to make sure each organising theme subsequently derived had encapsulated all of the codes with a similar nature and was well supported by the data (quotes). For example, four basic themes "special vocabulary", "professional terminology", "jargon" and "technical words" were all classified into one single organising theme named "Content Knowledge", which denoted the use of vocabulary related to a particular subject area in which South Asian interns were majored (see the second column of the table in Appendix 5).

At the final stage of data analysis, I considered how organising themes were themselves interrelated and how they could be collapsed to form larger categories, i.e. global themes, the upper order in Attride-Stirling's hierarchy. Each global theme was the core of one particular thematic network revealing an assertion/argument about a given reality. Once the global themes were determined, they were matched to Hutchinson and Waters' needs analysis model, which had already provided the pre-established global themes of "*Necessities*", "*Lacks*" and "*Wants*". This was because these three language needs were the guiding concerns of my research study. Taking the first global theme "*Necessities*" as an illustration, this thematic network comprised three organising themes and nine basic themes. This is set out in Appendix 5, which presents a detailed coding scheme for the data analysis of Chapter Six. Raw data from diaries and interviews suggested the basic themes such as "ability to initiate conversations" which were then subsumed under a broader organising theme "speaking skills" that in turn fed into the global theme, "*Necessities*". This approach ensured that Hutchinson and Waters' model linked directly to South Asian interns' conceptualisations of the Chinese language needs necessary for effective functioning in the workplace in Hong Kong. At the same time, the use of Attride-Stirling's hierarchy of three thematic levels allowed me to interpret the dataset in an iterative manner.

3.8 Issues of research standards

In scholarly activities, trustworthiness has become a matter of persuasion whereby scholars are viewed as trying to make their research findings visible and auditable (Sandelowski, 1993). Trustworthiness can further be divided into four research standards, namely, consistency, fidelity, verifiability and meaningfulness, applicable to both quantitative and qualitative research practice. While a positivist should focus on the quantitative research concepts of reliability, validity, replicability and generalisability, an interpretivist should try to maintain the analogous and equivalent qualitative research concepts of dependability, credibility, confirmability and transferability. Summarised from Brown (2009), the table below shows the four parameters that are used for judging the research standards of two major methodological traditions.

Quantitative	Research Standard	Qualitative
Reliability	Consistency	Dependability
Validity	Fidelity	Credibility
Replicability	Verifiability	Confirmability
Generalisability	Meaningfulness	Transferability

It should be noted that the strategies used to enhance dependability, credibility, confirmability and transferability in qualitative research are very different from those to achieve the analogous concepts in quantitative research. The following paragraphs show the measures that I have employed in my research to uphold the four key qualitative research standards: Dependability, Credibility, Confirmability and Transferability.

Dependability

A primary technique for assessing dependability is using the dependability audit that allows an independent auditor to review the scholarly activities of the researcher, as recorded in an audit trail in related documents or materials, and to judge if the techniques employed and the procedures involved is appropriate enough for achieving the qualitative research standards. Bearing this technique in mind, I maintained a multi-faceted audit trail so that the dependability of my inquiry could be assessed and thereby its trustworthiness enhanced. For example, I followed a case study protocol (Yin, 2013) and an audit trail (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) to document the whole research process and procedures.

Credibility

The notion of subjectivity is also addressed. I took the following two measures to bolster the credibility of my research inquiry and objectify the claims from my findings.

Triangulation: Both sources and methods were triangulated. Sources from individual viewpoints (SA interns) were verified against others (industrial practitioners, colleagues and teaching staff). Ultimately, a rich picture of the language attitudes and needs of those under scrutiny was constructed based on the contribution of a range of informants. Triangulation of methods was also done to compensate common methodological shortcomings of individual methods and to achieve complementarity.

Honesty in informants' data: From the outset, participants were encouraged to be genuine. I ensured that they had the right to withdraw their participation in my research without any adverse consequences so as to ensure the data collected were not based on forced or artificial consensus. I also reminded them repeatedly that there were no correct or incorrect opinions, and that I valued true and frank responses.

Confirmability

A higher degree of verifiability of the data upon which all interpretations in the study are based should be achieved by the researcher. The following table shows the measures I took to avoid biased interpretations and premature conclusions.

Measures	Remarks
Familiarisation	I critically and repeatedly read through the transcriptions before coding data.
Member checking	Participants were invited to read through the transcripts of dialogues to ensure their transcribed words matched the messages they intended to convey. I double checked with the participants to confirm that emerging codes and themes were accurate with no misinterpretations.
Solicitation of expert views	I shared the coding scheme with colleagues who had extensive experience in qualitative research.

Transferability

In positivist work, the concern often lies in proving whether or not the results of the research are generalisable. Since the findings of a qualitative inquiry are specific to a small number of individuals or situations, it is unrealistic to make efforts to demonstrate the results that can be applied to other populations or contexts. Qualitative researchers believe that the situation described in their studies is similar to other situations where their findings can be transferred. Therefore, their main focus is to ensure sufficient contextual information is provided in order to allow such a transfer in the future. To achieve transferability, I provided thick and deep description of the following items:

1. the historical and educational background of SA students residing in Hong Kong
2. the participating education provider: THEi
3. the target participants who contributed data: SA undergraduates of THEi
4. the methodological design including data collection and analysis methods employed
5. the time span during which the data was gathered

With the provision of the above information, my NA research is of great value for conducting future projects with similar contextual characteristics. The next section focuses on how this research was conducted in an ethical manner.

3.9 Ethical considerations

In my present capacity, I work as Teaching Fellow I, responsible for delivering two compulsory Chinese language modules, namely *GEC4101 Chinese 1* and *GEC5102 Chinese 2*, in the School of General Education and Languages of THEi. Besides teaching, I serve as the Module Convenor of *GEC4101 Chinese 1* and the Deputy Module Convenor of *GEC5102 Chinese 2*, responsible for handling and assessing module exemption applications of non-Chinese speaking students, among whom most have South Asian backgrounds. Some of them have expressed to me their desire to take the Chinese language modules; however, I have no choice but to reluctantly enforce what is, in fact, a mandatory exemption according to the institute's language policy. Sadly, there is no precedent for South Asian students being granted entry to either of the Chinese language modules. I believe that this discourages even those who actually wish to pursue learning the local language for vocational purposes. Outside the classroom, I actively participate in student-teacher activities (e.g. sports matches, singing contests and the International Fortnight), where I have met some South Asian students. In addition, I am a member of VTC's non-Chinese speaking learning community, which provides a platform for both novice and experienced teachers to exchange their experiences in teaching non-Chinese speaking students. Through these formal and informal channels, I managed to contact and invite some South Asian students of THEi to participate in this research. They were willing to help because they genuinely believed that the possession of Chinese language abilities would play a crucial role in their future career success.

In the research arena, there is growing concern about the ethical conduct during the research process involving human subjects. In the book titled *Research Methods in Education* (Cohen et al., 2013), research ethics is defined as “a matter of principled sensitivity to the rights of others”, suggesting that “while truth is good, respect for human dignity is better” (p.56). Simply put, if a researcher seeks out truth and knowledge at the expense of human justice, respect and beneficence, s/he is considered unethical (Farrugia, 2019). Therefore, the primary focus of human research is to protect participants by withholding the principles of research ethics. Babbie (2013) puts forward three ethical codes for social sciences researchers, which are (1) “anonymity and confidentiality”, (2) “voluntary participation” and (3) “no harm to the participant” (pp.67-72). To this end, I had taken the following measures to properly address the ethical issues that arose before, during and after this entire research study.

Informed consent

Obtaining an informed consent from the participants is essential, serving as a “Memorandum of Understanding” about the ethical procedures mutually agreed. To this end, I designed an information sheet (Appendix 6) detailing the following items of my research and a written consent form (Appendix 7) for the participants to sign at recruitment. In the two documents, the following points were highlighted.

- aspects of the research including significance, aims and procedures;
- what the participation entails and the associated risks and benefits;
- measures for keeping personal information and responses to ensure confidentiality;
- security management of both hard and soft data; and
- rights to decline and withdraw participation.

Voluntary participation

Participation in the research must be voluntary, entailing an expressed and informed willingness to participate. To this end, the participants in my research could reject, refuse to continue or even renounce to take part in the research for any or no reason, at any point of time and without facing any adverse consequences. In addition, they could refuse to respond to any questions they found objectionable or uncomfortable.

Confidentiality

Participants in the research had the right to complete confidentiality. Personal data collected were strictly for research purposes only and would not be publicly disclosed in any way that may reveal the identity of specific persons. To lawfully guarantee the privacy and protection of participants’ personal particulars, I strictly complied with the Data Protection Act 1998 (UK) and the Personal Data Privacy Ordinance Cap 486 (HK). In addition, to show gratefulness and respect to participants who were willing to help, I took great care at all times to keep all personal information in strict confidence.

Anonymity

Regarding the protection of participants’ identity, I used coded names and pseudonyms in both written and electronic forms of publication and presentations related to my research.

Data security and management

For hard copies of data, I kept all the signed informed consent forms, dairy records and transcripts of focus group discussions and interviews in a lockable pedestal cabinet in my office, while for soft copies of data, I securely stored audio files and e-documents in password-protected electronic devices including my smartphone, USB, desktop and laptop. Besides, all the e-files are encrypted. I would destroy all the materials after the completion of my research. These measures were taken to safeguard against leaking of data containing participants' identifying information and responses.

Ethical mindfulness and reflexivity during the conduct of interviews

Since the participating South Asian students of THEi volunteered to help with my research, I constantly reminded myself that apart from being used as a data collection instrument, the interview itself is indeed a human social encounter where the interviewer should act professionally, sensitively and ethically. To this end, I tried to create a positive and pleasant atmosphere where interviewees could feel comfortable and secure to talk freely. This operated in three dimensions. In the cognitive dimension, I presented myself as a knowledgeable Chinese language teacher who could conduct the interview in an informed manner. At the same time, I endeavored to convince interviewees of the importance and significance of their contributions and the benefits they could get from the results of the research so that they were more motivated to share. In the communication dimension, I presented myself as an acute communicator by listening actively, demonstrating a non-judgmental, non-assertive and non-stigmatising attitude, and showing acceptance, sympathy and respect. In the event that interviewees displayed negative emotions, I would first validate their feelings, then empathise, and finally normalise any unpleasant experiences they had raised. In the ethical dimension, I was careful not to elevate data collection over my consideration of issues relating to interviewees' mental wellbeing. If any of my interviewees showed discomfort during the interview, I would pause the interview in order to allow them time to calm down and feel better before proceeding any further. If I sensed that their emotional state was likely to deteriorate further, I would cease the interview immediately while reassuring them that this would not impact on the research nor negatively reflect on them.

As a final note, my efforts in addressing ethical concerns during the course of conducting the research were greatly aided by an atmosphere of mutual respect and cooperation which I fostered as well as I could by treating all the participants as collaborators (rather than as students) and by promoting the importance of the

research, a notion they seemed to embrace with enthusiasm. Of course, power relationships can distort one's reading of respondents' attitudes and motives but insofar as I had never taught any of the participants and would not do so in the future, I felt there were solid grounds for believing that the collegial atmosphere and sense of common purpose were genuine. During the course of writing, the diarists began to realise how important it was for them to possess sufficient Chinese language abilities to handle everyday workplace communication. This realisation may turn into motivation for their future learning of Chinese. In Appendix 4, the fourth sample diary shows that the diarist specifically referred to the difficulties she had experienced during the internship as a motivational factor for future efforts to improve Chinese. I was indeed grateful because as the researcher I had little other than gratitude to repay them for being valuable data providers, beyond light refreshments in our meetings.

3.10 Chapter conclusion

This chapter provides a detailed account of the philosophical perspective positioned and methodological framework set in this research. A qualitative approach was adopted because it is closely aligned to the exploratory nature of needs analysis, and therefore better suited to the purpose of the investigation of the language experiences and perspectives of L2 users. Research instruments such as focus group discussions and the diary-interview method were employed to solicit views of various stakeholders, including SA students, industrial practitioners, colleagues and teaching staff, in order to elicit thick and rich description. Information about the institute, participants and the researcher himself are described in detail. In addition, strategies and procedures to ensure high research standards are explained. How ethical issues were dealt with is also discussed in detail.

The following chapters on discussion of research findings provide a narrative account of the issues and themes that emerged from the analysis of written diaries and verbatim transcriptions of interviews, supported by feedbacks from various groups of participants.

Chapter Four – Education Experiences of Local South Asian Undergraduates

4.1 Introduction

This chapter addresses the first research question that relates to the perceptions of SA undergraduates in Hong Kong with regards to their education experiences at primary, secondary and tertiary levels, with particular emphasis on the impact of language policies on them. The literature review in Chapter Two indicates that few local research studies have targeted Hong Kong SA tertiary students, among whom only 1% are academic high-flyers admitted to undergraduate degree programmes. It is this exclusive group from which my research participants are drawn for investigations into their experiences on the use of Chinese in the realm of higher education. Thus, one of the major aims of the present study is to analyse SA undergraduate participants' experiences of learning Chinese in primary and secondary schools, and to identify similar and dissimilar viewpoints on the use of Chinese for the purposes of enhancing academic studies and future careers. The data were collected via two focus group discussion sessions conducted between June and September 2017. A total of eleven SA students were interviewed in two separate sessions. Findings are reported and discussed in the following sections.

4.2 Profile of focus group participants

Demographic characteristics of the participating SA students provide an important background for understanding their experiences learning the local language, i.e. Chinese. The age range of the eleven participants, seven females and four males, is from 17 to 24. Their ethnicities are Nepali (3), Indian (3), Pakistani (1), Filipino (3) and Indonesian (1). Five were born in Hong Kong while the rest settled in the territory between the ages of 3 and 6. None of them speak Chinese as a native or home language. All sat for the GCSE Chinese language examination and achieved grade A*. They used this overseas qualification to enroll in a degree programme of THEi. The degree majors they are studying at THEi vary, ranging from Business Management and Hospitality to Sports, Design and Science. An overview of the participants' personal profiles can be found in Appendix 9.

4.3 A bewildering experience learning Chinese in primary and secondary schools

All participants researched underwent 12 years of compulsory education in Hong Kong with 6 years in primary school and another 6 years in secondary school. Among the eleven participants, eight went to local government-aided/subsidised schools, while three went to international schools.

4.3.1 Primary education experience

The findings show that in local primary schools, these eight SA pupils followed the standard mainstream Chinese language curriculum. Born locally, some were capable of learning the local language on a par with their Hong Kong counterparts. This was largely due to their early familiarisation with the local language in their formative years, which has boosted their language abilities to a level similar to their grade-appropriate Chinese peers. Student S gave a representative view that she was satisfied with her academic performance in the Chinese subject.

When I was in primary one, I started learning Chinese until P6. I was learning it quite well. (Student S, born in HK, focus group session 1)

However, unlike those born in Hong Kong, three who arrived in Hong Kong at ages 3 to 6 had difficulties in learning Chinese as a second or even as a third language in their primary schooling, probably because they had missed the golden years of building a solid foundation in Chinese. As a result, their level of attainment in the target language was relatively poor and thus they had to switch to international schools halfway through. When asked for the reason of suddenly changing to another primary school in P5, Student M said:

The Chinese subject was so difficult for me. I think I failed all the tests and exams. (Student M, onset in HK at 3, focus group session 2)

4.3.2 Secondary education experience

The local literature indicates that these SA students are placed in the so-called “designated secondary schools”, with over 90% of them studying local curriculum including the Chinese language subject. The EDB allows these schools to adjust and modify its current mandatory Chinese language curriculum on a needs basis, sugar-coating it as a flexible curriculum while insisting on using it. However, this hands-off attitude has attracted wide criticism for failing to provide sufficient guidance on pedagogic methods to frontline teachers (Unison, 2016a). In responding, the EDB has put forward the “Chinese Language Curriculum Second Language Learning Framework” to allow individual local schools to adapt the mainstream Chinese language curriculum to their own resources and SA student population. For the sake of simplification in teaching, these SA secondary students are all deemed as beginners and arranged to study Chinese from the elementary level.

When these eight SA participants proceeded to public secondary schools, they all pointed out that their level of Chinese dropped drastically to an elementary level as the secondary curriculum was simpler and pitched at a lower level. The word “simple” was frequently used by them to describe the level of Chinese being taught. Below are the excerpts of their accounts in this respect.

But then when I grew up and got into a secondary school, the level decreased. For example, in Primary 6, the Chinese level I was at equal to Primary 3. Then in secondary school, EM students were separated and given a different but simple curriculum. The level of Chinese was back to Primary 1 level. (Student S, born in HK, focus group session 1)

Yea, we had our own curriculum, very simple one too. For example, if you are in secondary 1, you are learning Primary 1 in the Chinese class. (Student N, born in HK, focus group session 1)

Then I moved to another local school to continue Form 2 until Form 6. It's even worse because there's only a small group of EM students. They put us in a class with different Chinese levels and taught us very simple Chinese. Some of them were at the beginner level and I had to learn with them. So I couldn't advance my Chinese level. (Student G, born in HK, focus group session 1)

In an upset tone, Student S, Student D and Student Z gave some illustrative examples of the topics in the Chinese class which included learning vocabulary used in kinship like “father” and “mother”, in sports like “table tennis”, in transportation like “tram”, in Chinese festivals like “the Mid-Autumn Festival”, in local street snacks like “fish balls” and in facilities and equipment at school. Eventually, they lost motivation in learning the local language because:

So I felt bored when listening to something I had already understood. And no extra learning materials whatsoever were ever provided for me. (Student N, born in HK, focus group session 1)

It's so easy. It's so so easy. We were learning festivals and local snacks sold in the street again. Academic-wise speaking, it's not useful. (Student S, born in HK, focus group session 1)

Besides learning simple and pre-known content, teaching methods used were not practical and thus not well-received by SA students. One of them exemplified her feelings by commenting:

They [our teachers] focus on things that are like they ask us read the chapter, like it's **not really related** to what we need. I think the reason why because they focus more on textbooks like they just read to us. Normally, my homework was just memorising book vocabulary like 10 times. For what? Like the words were **not even relevant**. So I think teachers have to teach us what's on the book. I don't know why. (Student B, born in HK, focus group session 2)

Apparently, the EDB's homogenised language strategies failed to hit the bull's eye in meeting the true language learning expectations of local SA students. What was often heard these SA students asked was "what will I ever use it in the real workplace?" They would expect to learn hands-on practical language materials that are more engaging and occupational. Chapter Six will report the types of language needs derived from the work experiences of SA interns.

4.3.3 International school education experience

Since international schools in Hong Kong are not subject to the government curriculum system, students could enjoy greater autonomy in choosing what language to learn and what not to. The Chinese language curriculum offered in these international schools is only provided as an elective and therefore intended to serve students of various ethnicities who may further their studies overseas after finishing high school. Three SA students who settled in Hong Kong respectively at the age of 3 (Student G), 5 (Student P) and 6 (Student R) were sent to through-train international schools by their parents. In junior forms, Student G took French and had never studied Chinese, whereas Student P and Student R both took Chinese. Moving to senior forms, they were all arranged to study GCSE Chinese in order to meet the stipulated university admission requirement. Student G recalled her experience of being powerless to chart her course and said:

In fact, I was studying in an international school, so I didn't really learn Chinese at that time. They started teaching us French in junior forms. But then the government people told us that if you want to get into university in Hong Kong, you'd better learn Chinese. So our school dropped our French lessons and taught us GCSE Chinese. (Student G, onset in HK at 3, focus group session 1)

4.4 Tertiary education: A way out or a false hope?

Normally, students of local secondary schools will take the DSE route for access to universities in Hong Kong. The design of the DSE Chinese language examination assumes examinees to have a native-level command of both written and spoken Chinese and therefore demands a high level of Chinese language literacy as well as knowledge of Chinese culture. While the EDB tries to maintain the universal applicability of the Chinese language curriculum, it allows SA secondary school leavers to sit UK-based public examinations such as the GCSE as alternative Chinese qualifications. At the same time, it instructs local tertiary institutions to recognise these overseas qualifications as substitutes for the DSE Chinese language requirement when considering applications of SA secondary school leavers. Consequently, secondary schools will focus on preparing their SA students to take the UK-based Chinese language examination in higher forms, i.e. F4 to F6. A glimpse of hope seems to reside in this adjustment. Most SA students would opt for the much easier GCSE Chinese paper in order to meet the admission requirement for higher education.

All of the SA participants expressed their aspirations of pursuing post-secondary education and thus enrolled in the vocational training degrees offered by THEi. When asked about their performance in the GCSE, they unanimously answered in a satisfied tone, telling the interviewer that they were awarded a Grade A* and that they managed to get admitted to THEi. However, when further asked if such an overseas qualification could propel them to further academic and career development, they looked perplexed with a mix of frustration and disappointment, as if their sense of achievement instantly disappeared into oblivion. Below are some of their replies which show their contempt when preparing for this exam:

It's pretty easy. The exam just asked us very simple stuff at a very basic level.

I don't think it's useful for anything. We can learn those things ourselves.

(Student Z, onset in HK at 6, focus group session 2)

The GCSE A Level I took is A*. It's equivalent to Level 3 DSE. This one is easier.

Like in the listening exam, "ngo5 giu3 siu2 ming4, gam1 nin4 sap6 ji6 sei3"³

(English Translation: My name is Siu Ming, I'm 12 years old now), and the question would be "how old is Siu Ming?" [...] you answer in English. So it's like translation, translating Chinese to English. So it's much easier for us.

(Student D, born in HK, focus group session 1)

³ The Cantonese Romanisation Scheme established by the Linguistic Society of Hong Kong was used in this thesis.

Yea, and for the writing exam, they gave us a piece of paper to write about 100 words, and the whole composition is just 250 words. [...] What's more, the topic was given beforehand. So we could just memorise the whole thing in our head the previous night. (Student S, born in HK, focus group session 1)

In fact, achieving Grade A* in the GCSE Chinese paper is equivalent to Primary 2-3 level in a local school (Cheung et al., 2015). It is unfair and unreasonable for SA students who reside and receive local education here in Hong Kong to only attain a level which foreign students living elsewhere with little exposure to Chinese can obtain in 2 years or so. This low level of Chinese language proficiency will adversely impact on their future employability (Chan, 2005, Loper, 2004). The responsibility would then lie with tertiary institutions, especially those private vocational ones, which are facing the risk of survival due to the decline of student demographics and have thus been aggressively admitting SA secondary school leavers to their self-financing degree programmes in recent years.

Most SA students in Hong Kong believe that post-secondary education will provide a means of upward mobility in the society, but our data reveals that its failure to ensure graduates are linguistically equipped for the local market actually poses an obstacle to life, in particular the social aspect that is critical to effective interpersonal communication at work. THEi is a classic example of this failure. As mentioned in Chapter Three, THEi is a self-financing vocational tertiary institute, with the mission of offering career-oriented degree programmes for secondary school leavers to meet the rising demand of the local labour market. It treats its SA students the same as international exchange students, and therefore grants them exemptions from Chinese modules, requiring them to take 2 general education electives to make up the exempted credits.

However, unlike international exchange students who will return to their home countries upon completion of their undergraduate studies, these home-grown SA students at THEi will join the local workforce after graduation. If the ultimate education goal of THEi is to fully prepare its students to be work-ready in society, it is inarguably necessary to equip its SA students with sufficient vocational Chinese language abilities and skills. Therefore, the first and foremost step in doing so is to fully understand the authentic Chinese language barriers and needs the SA students of THEi have.

4.4.1 Desire to expand language repertoire

SA participants fully understand their deficiency in Chinese vis-à-vis the bi-literate and tri-lingual policy, so their prime concern in tertiary education is to acquire appropriate language skills for vocational purposes. Their frustration with THEi waiving their attendance of Chinese classes was captured in the following comments:

I think that's **ridiculous**. Like my sister, who is studying in Chu Hai (a private tertiary institution) , could take a Chinese course for non-local students. (Student S, born in HK, focus group session 1)

I feel **upset** because for my friends who are now studying in local universities, they could choose to take a series of GE elective courses including Cantonese and Putonghua that are tailor-made for foreign students. So if THEi had this kind of GE elective courses, I would take one, no doubt. (Student N, born in HK, focus group session 1)

I think it's **stupid**. [...] I feel that they don't really care about us. (Student E, born in HK, focus group session 2)

Besides learning the Chinese language, a few SA participants expressed their wish to learn other languages that are conducive to better career prospects in the future. They wish the school could offer foreign languages such as Spanish, French and Japanese to compensate their loss of a chance of learning Chinese. Student G, Student D and Student E suggested in a complaining tone:

I also feel it's not fair. If you don't allow us to take Chinese, at least let us do **another language** subject. So I don't know how to say, a language for a language, so we can also have some sort of advantage, like I don't learn Chinese, but I learn another language in university. (Student G, onset in HK at 3, focus group session 1)

But the thing is that we hope if we drop Chinese, we can put another language to replace like **Spanish, French**, but nothing in this school, we don't have that. At least you replace Chinese with another language. It's not something that it won't help you in the future. For hotel management, of course learning Chinese is actually a good thing. But because we didn't learn Chinese much, we hope to learn other languages, which help us also. (Student D, born in HK, focus group session 1)

THEi doesn't try to help us. Well, I haven't seen any. I know my faculty wants to hold a Japanese course. But the thing is that local students want to learn foreign languages, but us, non-Chinese, we want to learn Putonghua or Chinese, you know, just basically Chinese. And that is not given to us. I think it's not because they don't like us, but because we are just a tiny portion.

(Student E, born in HK, focus group session 2)

The language options provided for these SA students ran counter to the school's vision of "we produce work-ready graduates". Their tone seemed to denote a feeling of being neglected. They certainly realise that without appropriate language competency, even holding a university degree may not offer them secure employment options, or even dignified existence, in the society. Their anxiety about future employment upon undergraduate graduation is well founded. Unfortunately however, as a minority, they can do nothing about the system, and were perhaps already doomed by their primary and secondary education experiences. It is clear that THEi does little to address this situation and by failing to extend the linguistic repertoire of its SA students, does not fulfill its vision of producing work-ready graduates.

4.4.2 Unfavorable treatment caused by language barriers

Language barriers hindered the overall learning experience of SA students at THEi. Our findings show that a language barrier is an obstacle in and of itself that has undermined the social life of students with minority backgrounds.

4.4.2.1 Language-induced segregation

SA students at THEi faced isolation in and out of classrooms by their Chinese-speaking classmates who showed unwelcoming attitudes towards them. The de facto segregation was caused primarily by a bi-directional language factor, i.e. in one way, insufficient Chinese ability of SA students and in another way, insufficient English ability of local students. On some occasions, SA students found that their classmates were unwilling to converse with them in English and therefore displayed behaviours of "rejecting", "avoiding" or "ignoring" them.

I don't know why Hong Kong students seem to be very shy when speaking English. They just keep themselves in a small circle speaking Chinese among themselves and ignoring others who don't speak their language. (Student B, born in HK, focus group session 2)

Well, in year one, they were so scared to talk to us. (Student D, born in HK, focus group session 1)

Because usually, if I speak to them in English, they are kind of like rejecting me. I remember on the first day, it's the orientation day, they realised that I'm a non-Chinese, and I'm the only non-Chinese in the group. And then they were like very shocked. They started discussing stuff in Chinese and they didn't approach me. They just did their own stuff and I was there doing my own stuff too. We didn't even communicate at all even though I knew some basic Chinese, they just ignored me because I'm a non-Chinese. They fear that they need to speak English. (Student E, born in HK, focus group session 2)

Plainly stated, the postcolonial government's policy of mother-tongue teaching has produced a generation of local students with less communicative competence in English. However, the impact on friendship establishment with non-Chinese speaking students has exacerbated the language difficulties SA students are facing. Surprisingly, instead of blaming the education system itself (though indeed seething with unfocused resentment), the participating SA students were all passively internalised this unfavourable treatment. They blamed themselves for being unable to function in Chinese and saw this as having led them to a friendless university life. Student D reported difficulty in making friends with her Chinese-speaking schoolmates. As she bitterly recalled:

I got so fed up that no one dared to make friends with us. They were making friends among themselves, and then we two non-Chinese just talked to each other, and then it's like "we have got each other, and we don't care." But the thing is sometimes, we still care. Come on, it's university life where you can make friends. But we don't have friends. (Student D, born in HK, focus group session 1)

This dire insularity is also manifested in group-forming ethos reinforced by language barriers. There are several comments constructing the SA student body at THEi as insular and segregated in the ethnically homogeneous classroom during group activities and assessments. A striking comment made was:

We are the only two students not from Hong Kong. I know local classmates can understand English, and for one time, we pretended we were from

elsewhere like from America to scare them a bit to like force them to speak English to us. But they just went away and didn't want to talk to us. It's ok to get embarrassed in front of each other, you know, we are here to learn. Another problem is whenever there is a group project, we are the last persons to get chosen. [...] So when it comes to a group project, I kind of like translate for her [a SA classmate]. And other local groupmates speak in Chinese and pretend that they don't see her like she is a ghost or something. So she just sits there. And then at the end of the discussion, I have heard they told her "We will tell you in the WhatsApp group." It's kind of like it's really unfair for us to deal with this. We feel bad because we don't know Chinese that well. We are not approached just because we don't speak well in Chinese. (Student G, onset in HK at 3, focus group session 1)

The above narrative of a minority student demonstrated that this language-induced segregation was influenced by irreconcilable Chinese-ness values powered by the mother-tongue teaching policy. This seemed to vindicate the side effects of EDB's language policies brought to NCS students residing in Hong Kong. By way of contrast, the following section exemplifies successful integration of minority students who always do the language bowing in order to secure parity in interethnic activities.

4.4.2.2 Social inclusion facilitated by the conceived "Chinese-ness"

On the other hand, SA students who demonstrated fluent spoken Chinese ability proved that they could be accepted by their Chinese-speaking schoolmates. This language-induced social integration was highlighted when the SA participants, like Student M and Student S below, described their experiences with their local classmates who seemed to open themselves up more freely when chatting with their non-Chinese speaking peers using their native tongue, i.e. Cantonese.

Usually for group projects, I have no problem in finding a group. I think because I always talk to them in Chinese and hang out with them, just like now in the summer holiday, we always go out to have fun, play basketball, and do stuff together. (Student M, onset in HK at 4, focus group session 2)

At the beginning, she [a local classmate] spoke English to me. But then she found out I could speak Chinese. She used Chinese all the way. She became friendlier when we chatted in Chinese. (Student S, born in HK, focus group session 1)

However, most SA students in THEi felt socially excluded in class and on campus, the major reason being the local language dominance pressuring minority students to integrate. This results in ethnic segregation. The finding here coincides with prior studies concerning the social exclusion or otherisation that results from the linguistic difficulties of EM students in local primary and secondary schools (Gao, 2018). The findings here also illustrate that while it is generally understood that SA primary and secondary school students are excluded from the classroom and from community language practices in local schools due to the impact of the implementation of the mother-tongue language teaching policy, this phenomenon is surprisingly extended to the tertiary education setting. Although local undergraduate students are expected to have a solid foundation of English to communicate freely in that language, they still leave their non-Chinese peers behind. It is evident that fluency in Chinese language is instrumentally important for these SA undergraduates as a means to social integration in university life in Hong Kong. This research also establishes that these findings will be replicated in local workplaces where SA undergraduates undertake their internships (as discussed in Chapter Five).

4.4.3 Rationalised lingua franca in the future workplace

With a remarkable history that moved through colonisation by the British to transition to a Special Administrative Region of China after the 1997 handover, it comes as no surprise that Hong Kong is a renowned melting pot of Eastern and Western characteristics. After the handover, it is an aspirational undertaking of the HKSAR government to establish itself as the world city of Asia and an international financial centre. Therefore, the use of English as a lingua franca is naturally regarded as commonplace for inter-ethnic and inter-cultural communication in the local workplace. The embeddedness in this sense was elucidated by the following comments of Student S and Student Z.

Because Hong Kong is an international city, so when you go to Central where all business companies are located, you can only hear English. So I'm not so sure when will we use Chinese in the job. I'm not so sure how the business world in Hong Kong really works since I don't have a first-hand experience. So yea, let's see what will happen in the future. (Student S, born in HK, focus group session 1)

But I think Hong Kong is a famous financial hub in the globe where there are many big companies owned by non-Chinese people. Staff working in these companies can communicate in English. But since I don't have any

experience working in Hong Kong, I don't really know. Maybe knowing some Chinese is necessary. I am not sure. (Student Z, onset in HK at 6, focus group session 2)

While there was seemingly a common understanding amongst most of the SA participants that learning Chinese was instrumentally important as a means of securing a future job after graduation, a portion of them expressed their hope that they could still function in local workplaces without knowing much of the local language. In the next chapter, this ideal language anticipation will be verified by the job diaries written by THEi SA student interns who have recorded their actual language experiences in the local workplace settings.

4.5 Chapter conclusion

Clearly, there are confused perceptions amongst focus group participants. These show up in mismatches between (1) satisfaction with their GCSE Chinese results on the one hand, and dissatisfaction of being denied opportunities to achieve meaningful competence in the language on the other hand, and (2) linguistically-accepted social inclusion (able to speak Chinese) and linguistically-rejected isolation (unable to speak Chinese). All these perceived language barriers of SA undergraduates might have become actual ones for them at the time of joining the local workforce. To break down or to break through, it really comes to a matter of SA individuals' mastery of the local language. The following chapters discuss language barriers SA student interns actually encountered in various local workplaces and the language needs to surmount the barriers are identified.

Chapter Five – Chinese Language Use and Users in the Workplaces of Hong Kong

5.1 Introduction

This chapter addresses the second research question that relates to the use of Chinese and the resulting language barriers encountered by South Asian interns in local workplaces and how they feel about these barriers. The data were collected through diaries written by SA students of THEi during their internships and verbal accounts recorded in post-diary follow-up interviews. The data were then triangulated with views of the programme leaders of THEi and other local industrial practitioners. A total of six SA interns across different industries were invited to participate. A profile of each SA diarist is described in Appendix 9.

In order to accurately interpret the Chinese language needs of SA tertiary students, it is important to examine the complexity of local workplaces and the language experiences of the users. In the following sections, I will first describe the physical geographical locations where the researched SA interns worked as well as those of individuals to whom they communicate in Chinese. Secondly, I will examine the language barriers encountered by them. Finally, their feelings about these barriers will be reported. In Chapter Six, based on these interns' written and verbal accounts, I will address their Chinese language learning needs in the light of Hutchinson and Waters' model of target needs. The findings resulting from this qualitative study will inform curriculum design and development of learning Chinese as a second language for home-grown SA tertiary students in Hong Kong.

5.2 The context of the target language use: Register and audience

In their day-to-day work, SA interns were required and expected to use Chinese in a variety of registers with different target audiences involved. The use of Chinese can be broadly classified into two main types: the external-based and the internal-based communication in the matrix of recipients and locations. For internal-based communication in Chinese, co-workers including colleagues in senior, peer and junior ranks and fellow interns are common language recipients. In this study, seniors include employers, managers and immediate supervisors; peers are those who hold the same rank; juniors include junior employees such as janitors, office boys and tea ladies. The communication with them takes place in back office areas such as individual offices and staff common areas. For external-based communication, service receivers (customers and clients) and work-related individuals (couriers and technicians) are common language recipients. The communication with them takes place in front-line work sites including wards, restaurants, sports fields or through

telephone, emails and other media.

5.3 Second language barriers

Second language barriers in job settings involving linguistically-diverse populations are reported to be a major concern for both industrial practitioners and professionals in a large number of international studies on L2 learning. According to the research studies reviewed in Chapter Two, the different language barriers that non-local student interns face include (1) difficult integration into the local workforce (Dagher and D'Netto, 1997, Deresky, 2000, Lee, 2001, Lim and Alum, 1995), (2) miscommunication or even conflicts between supervisors and subordinates (Kam, 2003, Loosemore and Lee, 2002, Ogbonna and Harris, 2006) and (3) obstacles that hinder ethnic minority employees from progressing and excelling (Froy and Pyne, 2011). The findings derived from the respondents' verbal episodes and language practices in the work settings are discussed in the following sections.

5.3.1 Language barrier to institutional integration

At the institutional level, segregation is caused primarily by language factors, as identified in the verbal and written accounts of the SA university interns. Chinese was used for social networking at local workplaces when employers were not working or during breaks. Some respondents indicated that they were isolated due to their inability to use the local language to socialise with their colleagues or workmates.

Generally, in the internship workplace, most of my colleagues naturally **chit-chat in Cantonese** among themselves while they are not working. Even though sometimes it doesn't affect our duties that much [...]
(Mike, a sports therapist student, diary entry)

The chefs were **casually talking** and I was among them. They were talking **in Chinese** which I didn't understand. (Bu, a culinary arts student, diary entry)

Conversing daily issues in Chinese is taken-for-granted among the Chinese-speaking colleagues at the workplace. The above responses point to the fact that language barriers result in social segregation between local and ethnic minority staff members during non-working times. The finding here again aligns with previous research studies regarding the social exclusion that results from linguistic difficulties of students with minority backgrounds (Kam, 2003, O'Connor, 2010). Without mastery of the local language, this linguistically-driven social exclusion seems to occur not only at school but also at work. At work, the label of isolation can be perceived as a

language barrier that affects collegial relationships and ultimately lowers the sense of job satisfaction and sense of belonging.

Despite having very limited Chinese abilities, these SA student interns sought to interact with their local colleagues at least at the social level. In the sample case, Mike mentioned his genuine desire for making friends with his local co-workers.

I guess the level of my Chinese lowers my language confidence in approaching local colleagues to join their conversations or to make conversations with them. I always want myself to be able to spark a conversation where I can confidently speak and carry on, so I can connect with local colleagues better and get into their “**friend zone**”. (Mike, a sports therapist student, post-diary debriefing)

Viewed from a sociological angle, small talk can facilitate the establishment of workplace relationships and networks (Holmes, 2014). Through conversations on daily issues, healthy collegial relationships can be established, shared meanings developed and team spirit formed. Although CSL interns demonstrate their willingness to engage in social conversations with their Chinese colleagues, their low linguistic confidence prevents them from getting into, in Mike’s words, the “friend zone”. This kind of otherness in the social discourse may frustrate, if not stress, them.

5.3.2 Language barrier to effective communication

Language is an essential tool in any form of communication. In all facets of society including the workplace, one is expected to clearly and precisely convey a message others can fully and perfectly understand. Communication becomes difficult in situations where there are linguistic differences between L1 and L2 users. The inability to effectively interact with others when using a second language is regarded as a language barrier to effective communication. Second language barriers are the most commonly seen communication barriers that cause misunderstandings and misinterpretations in a multilingual work environment. Both internal and external communication barriers existed in the workplace, with three hierarchical dimensions identified with the former and the latter related to communication with outside parties.

Internal communication barriers in 3 hierarchical dimensions

● Senior-level communication

Senior-level communication involves senior staff in management positions tasking subordinates. Misunderstandings commonly happened in situations when SA interns led their supervisors to believe that they had understood instructions but in reality they had not. Sometimes, SA interns would want to retain an impression of being a competent employee by not admitting that they either misunderstood or did not understand the instructions. One SA intern, Kurt, attributed his failure to clearly understand the instruction given by his department manager to construct a questionnaire about charges for waste disposal to his sub-standard Chinese proficiency. The questionnaire was intended to be distributed to local residents.

I finally realised her intention of setting this questionnaire. She wanted to lead respondents to agree to the fact that waste charging could increase illegal waste disposal. But she didn't spell out her intention at the very beginning. She just simply asked me to create a questionnaire about the impact caused by waste charging. [...] I had to do it twice at the end. (Kurt, an environmental engineering student, follow-up interview)

What Kurt had written in his diary did not seem to be an admission of his insufficient Chinese but rather a suggestion of his manager's failure to give clear and direct instructions on the task requirements. In fact, this scenario shows that one of the typical top-down styles of Chinese communication is to use a connotative way of delivering thoughts, comments and opinions. In Chinese, cultural meanings and communicative styles interconnect with each other in any act of verbal interactions (Fang and Faure, 2011).

The standard of an effective communicator often hinges on the employee's ability to read between-the-lines in an attempt to decipher the supervisor's meaning. The effective use of language in workplace interactions is often restricted by these interns' limited sociolinguistic and pragmatic knowledge of the Chinese language. Therefore, it is important for non-native speakers of Chinese to be aware of this communication style so that the embedded intentions are fully understood or interpreted.

Miscommunication between supervisors and supervisees can lead to misunderstanding, unintended uncooperative attitudes, and in the worst-case scenario non-renewal of employment contracts. This finding is supported by Mr Leung, Internship Coordinator of BA in Hotel Operations and Management at THEi, and Ms

Cheung, Accounts Manager of an international accounting firm. They insisted that in a largely Chinese speaking office environment, these interns were at a disadvantage even if they spoke near native English. They would have to “bite the bullet” to learn both written and spoken Chinese in order to build a smoother and brighter career path.

- Peer-level communication

Peer-level communication refers to horizontal language interactions among staff members of the same hierarchical level. English interactions in local workplaces are very limited and are predominantly on a needs basis as the majority of staff members are local Hong Kongers who naturally use Chinese as their lingua franca. Even when job issues involve SA colleagues, local colleagues would still choose to use Chinese for more convenience and quicker delivery of instructions. Mike provided evidence by sharing an episode from his work:

Generally, before an event a rundown is delivered to everyone to understand the flow of the event and the roles of each and every one. But being the only non-Chinese in the team, the instructor would deliver it in Chinese and translate some keywords in English for me. I would miss some information.

(Mike, a sports therapist student, diary entry)

Although Hong Kong is known as an international financial city, it may still not provide a level playing field for non-Chinese speaking employees, as in the case of these SA interns. Sometimes they are naive in their expectations about the use of English in general work-related occasions in the office. Saman, a PR intern, queried why her Hong Kong colleagues and clients preferred to speak Chinese to her even though they were competent English speakers as well. She exemplified what she had called this “interesting” phenomenon:

Hong Kong people really value their language. For example, the setting of the computers in the office is in Chinese. It is very interesting to me. In the language I speak, we don’t have this language setting in the computer, so we just use English. But I really respect that and find it very interesting.

(Saman, a PR student, post-diary debriefing)

Bu shared a similar language experience where she was expected to communicate in Chinese with her cooking workmates in a local American restaurant.

Working in an American restaurant, it was quite shocking that I had to use Chinese to communicate with the kitchen staff. But what made me very confused was that they expected me to be very fluent in Chinese while I did not expect them to be the same in English. (Bu, a culinary arts student, diary entry)

The section below illustrates further that this kind of expected oral communication in Chinese predominates at the lower level of daily workplace activities.

● Junior-level communication

Junior-level communication involves language interactions with staff members who hold junior positions. Often, SA interns had to work with their junior colleagues to ask questions about procedures and processes, to give instructions and suggestions, to explain problems and solutions, etc. Most of these junior colleagues are monolingual or have very limited English literacy. Therefore, communication with them became highly problematic.

I felt bad as I couldn't do my best to talk to her [dishwasher] in Chinese. I mean I don't expect her to know English but I hope I would become better in speaking Chinese in the future. (Bu, a culinary arts student, diary entry)

Today was the first day I worked in the office. The cleaning lady came to me and said something to me in Chinese, but I had no clue what she was talking about. So I first replied her in English, but she didn't seem to understand me. Then I tried to speak very simple Cantonese, and she looked puzzled, so I just did some body language and smiled at her. Then we never talked again for the whole day. (Anjali, an accounting student, diary entry)

Even if it is possible for Hong Kong people to speak enough English to express themselves clearly and to understand everything that is said, it is unlikely that many of them will use English when speaking to colleagues from other ethnicities. The findings here suggest that the dominant language in most local workplaces at all levels is Chinese and miscommunication between colleagues can lead to a halt in day-to-day operations. The findings here also imply that SA interns wish to display linguistic adaptation and make conscientious efforts to communicate in a colleague-friendly style in order to create a collaborative work environment.

External communication barriers

● Service receivers

Besides internal language interactions, SA interns also needed to engage in external ones with service recipients including clients, customers and guests. Unfortunately, communication broke down in situations where they were expected to speak Chinese. Working in an American restaurant, Bu, who studied culinary arts, was sometimes requested to introduce new dishes to guests. There was one time when she was called upon to explain ingredients and cooking methods to a monolingual couple who she thought were from Mainland China. She bemoaned her incompetence in spoken Chinese which led to her failure in providing quality food and beverage services:

The Chinese customers don't understand what I say in English at all. They asked for a Chinese menu. In reply, I told them this is an American restaurant and we don't have Chinese menus. Then they left. (Bu, a culinary arts student, post-diary debriefing)

In the healthcare sector, communication could be a matter of life and death, especially when both patients and paramedics speak a second language. Nigel, a healthcare student working in the dietetic department of a local hospital, failed to notice a Chinese surname wrongly written when taking an anthropometric measurement for an elderly patient.

I don't know that one Chinese surname can spell differently in English. I think a lot of us who don't know Chinese may think "can4" always spells as "Chan", but sometimes it can be different, like "Chen". What makes it even more confusing is that different Chinese surnames can have the same spelling in English. I should be aware of that. (Nigel, a healthcare student, post-diary debriefing)

The mistake was picked up by his prudent supervisor, a dietitian, who had asked him to double check the patient's ID number on the database to make sure every piece of information was accurately written. It was fortunate that his mistake was corrected in time. Communication difficulties with clients due to language barriers also gave Anjali, an accounting intern, some frustrating language experiences in conveying information to her Mainland clients.

I needed to call clients in China to give them our Hong Kong office address. There is something they needed to send to us by post. Since I couldn't speak

Chinese, I just gave them our English office address. Clients from China can't speak English at all, and even though they can, just very little and with a heavy accent. Their English is really difficult to understand. I feel very frustrated because I need to repeat what I have said so many times. And sometimes I need to guess what they mean. (Anjali, an accounting student, diary entry)

Anjali worked in a small accounting firm owned by an Australian. She was the only employee with an Asian background and look, and therefore she was requested by her boss to deal with Chinese clients even though she had very little knowledge of the Chinese language. In one of the post-diary interviews with her, Anjali rejoiced over an incident where she was able to use her limited Chinese to communicate with the post office to retrieve a parcel from the Mainland which had the wrong Hong Kong address on it.

I feel lucky because the post officer could understand the mis-spelt address, and the parcel could still be sent to us. I can't imagine what would have happened if the parcel was lost. My boss may report the mistake I have made on the final internship report. I don't want to receive a bad grade. (Anjali, an accounting student, post-diary debriefing)

During communication breakdowns, the easiest way for SA interns to immediately solve the language problem was to solicit help from a bilingual colleague. Mike and Nigel turned to their peer colleagues when they failed to handle their Chinese-speaking service receivers.

I needed a colleague to translate everything for me because local athletes were mostly speaking in Cantonese and I felt bad that he [a local colleague] had to take a lot of time to translate, and that I had to ask very detailed information. (Mike, a sports therapist student, diary entry)

I wasn't sure if she [a patient] couldn't understand my Chinese or my English. Until my local colleague came up to help and said "jing4 joeng5 bou6 gei3 tung4 si6" ["We are from the dietetic department."] , she then kind of opened up a little bit and started talking to..."us"...in Cantonese. I did try to jump in the conversation using Cantonese, but I was really slow. I couldn't really ask follow-up questions. So I'd better keep my mouth shut and just observe. (Nigel, a healthcare student, post-diary debriefing)

SA interns commented that local bilingual colleagues were generally kind and helpful. However, the inability to discharge job duties due to poor Chinese abilities bruised their ego and made them feel inferior.

Communication breakdowns with service receivers very often lead to the loss of business deals and complaints. Employers may come to realise that English alone does not suffice to handle transactions increasingly involving mainland service receivers who expect these SA workers to be proficient in Chinese. The findings here again show that SA interns wish to display an ability to adapt linguistically to communicate in a service receiver-friendly style to show their professionalism and to provide quality services.

- Daily work-related individuals

External communication also occurred when SA interns made contact with work-related outside parties who speak virtually no English. Saman who performed office duties needed to occasionally interact with outside parties including couriers and pest control technicians.

The courier lady walked in with a letter for my superior who was not in the office, so I received it on his behalf. The courier was a local Chinese and couldn't speak English. I was new to this office, so I called my superior as no one else was in the office at that time. (Saman, a PR student, diary entry)

She felt helpless when there was no one around to help her out. Gradually, she developed a habit of rejecting local people by saying “no”. This suggested that SA interns resorted to minimising interaction with outside parties because of their limited Chinese language ability.

Sometimes, I feel that I'm answering things without knowing what's going on. So I just say “no” to everything and everyone to avoid embarrassment or getting too involved. I did try my best before, but always ended up with a mess. (Saman, a PR student, follow-up interview)

From the above, it can be seen that this kind of interactions usually resulted in SA interns giving up on further engaging in the Chinese language. This inability to speak made them feel embarrassed, disrespectful and sometimes desperate (see Section 5.4).

5.3.3 Language barrier to career success

Language deficiency is often perceived as an obstacle that directly affects one's career advancement. SA interns expressed their worries. Although these interns possessed relevant skills and professional knowledge in their respective fields, they worried about being unfamiliar with common workplace jargon and insensitive to linguistic codes which could impede their future career development. Mike appeared to be the most active among others in expressing worries about their future career goals.

I was serving as an on-field first aider who needed to go out to the field whenever a player got injured. Once a local non-English speaking player was injured and I struggled to use my fragmented Cantonese to ask questions about his injury. He could point to where he was hurt but I couldn't follow up with questions as to what kind of pain or injury he sustained, or tell him to perform certain movements so that I could examine his injury. After a long while, other players, coaches and spectators turned to me as if they queried my ability. It really made me feel embarrassed and incompetent. I'm afraid that my performance would leave a bad impression to the Rugby Union and I hope this would not ruin my name. (Mike, a sports therapist student, diary entry)

It is obvious to see that the SA interns wanted to perform their job duties well but due to their low language proficiency in Chinese, they were unable to demonstrate their fullest potential to the employers. They may be classified as monolingual English speakers by local employers, colleagues and clients which severely restrict their employment opportunities and is detrimental to their career prospects in the HKSAR which advocates bi-literacy (written Chinese and English) and tri-lingualism (spoken Cantonese, Mandarin/Putonghua and English). Mr Leung, Internship Coordinator of BA in Hotel Operations and Management at THE, perceived the possession of Chinese language competence as an edge and the absence of it as a hindrance when it comes to job promotion.

For job promotion, it is definitely an advantage to speak good Chinese, which is seen as an added edge for EM employees. They will stand a higher chance because for managerial positions, speaking Cantonese is quite important for managing junior local staff. My experience tells me that miscommunication often exists between English speaking only managers and local Chinese staff. (Mr Leung, Internship Coordinator of the BA in Hotel Operations and Management, triangulation interview)

While English is perhaps the most important language in the international commercial and industrial arena, the findings yielded here indicates that Chinese takes on an especially functional role as the regional lingua franca and thus serves as an essential building block in the career development and advancement of university graduates with minority ethnic origins.

Besides the three language barriers mentioned above, it was found that adverse feelings are also an indicator of language barriers occurring in the workplace. Section 5.4 reports and discusses personal feelings that were identified from the SA participants' language encounters during their internships.

5.4 Affective barriers

While student interns may be confronted with language problems, they also have to deal with psychological problems which include frustration, anxiety and stress, as suggested by prior research studies (Murray, 2010, Cohen and Norst, 1989). In the affective dimension, personal feelings that resulted from the above-mentioned language barriers were mostly negative. Every SA participant pointed out language barriers as the main reason for harbouring negative emotions, which was described in an overarching theme of "affective barriers associated with lack of sufficient Chinese proficiency in the work environment". Below are the five sub-themes in relation to "affective barriers".

5.4.1 Becoming an outsider

Often at work, small talk has a function to oil the wheels of social networking. Both Dr Lee and Ms Cheung pointed to the fact that it was common for local colleagues to speak in their native tongue for non-work related situations.

I think when the majority in a society speaks the same language, the minority is expected to learn this dominant language. When having a casual conversation in the office, a local staff might feel inconvenient to translate every slang or jargon for non-local colleagues. This is not a matter of friendliness or kindness. It's social expectation. (Dr Lee, Programme Leader of the BA in Public Relations and Management, triangulation interview)

But when it doesn't involve foreign colleagues' participation, local staff members certainly use Chinese among themselves. It's more convenient and quicker in terms of communication. (Ms Cheung, an accounts manager, triangulation interview)

An inability to communicate effectively in informal situations in Chinese was a common occurrence identified in casual workplace language interactions in the presence of some of the SA interns like Mike and Bu. The excerpts below revealed that they experienced a lack of acceptance by the group because of not being able to engage in a conversation in Cantonese, and thus were treated as “an outsider” by their fellow workers.

Generally, in the internship workplace, most of my colleagues naturally chit-chat in Cantonese among themselves while they are not working. Even though sometimes it doesn't affect our duties that much, it made me feel **out of place** and **isolated** and it somehow affects my confidence and overall work satisfaction. (Mike, a sports therapist student, diary entry)

The chefs were casually talking and I was among them. They were talking in Chinese which I didn't understand. I felt like I was **left out** and was very much on my own, but I didn't mind. (Bu, a culinary arts student, diary entry)

While both Mike and Bu pointed out that inability to engage in social discourse did not directly affect job duties, it should not be neglected that a competent worker should be able to handle the mixing of social and work routines. It seems to suggest that keeping up with the social conversation in the local language could serve as a bonding vehicle allowing them to be “let-in” and become part of the social circle of local colleagues, which is deemed a built-in component of cooperative work life. This coincides with prior studies which bear evidence that the sense of isolation is a partial explanation of language barriers (Long, 2005). In addition, Ms Lo, who worked as a Language Consultant, agreed that for ethnic minority employees, speaking the local language could help facilitate healthy collegial relationships and cooperation. The ability to communicate socially in L2 does play an important role in building collegial rapport, expressing friendliness and even maintaining solidarity among colleagues in the local workplace.

5.4.2 Becoming a trouble-maker

When encountering communication difficulties, such as dealing with non-English speaking service receivers, SA interns considered their peer colleagues as an important and perhaps the only source for immediate assistance. Success in task execution is practically built on their language competence, of which lacking in sufficient language ability means they would create problems for their co-workers. Mike wrote in his diary that he had to rely heavily on his colleagues for obtaining

job-related information originally presented in Chinese.

Some of them are actually very helpful and they genuinely want to help me out like to translate for me and elaborate information for me. But sometimes, they only give me brief answers. I can feel that...huh...not that they don't like helping me, but that they are just not encouraged to explain everything to me in detail. I understand that, especially when it involves a lot of information. It's so inconvenient to them and I don't want to keep bugging them. (Mike, a sports therapist student, diary entry)

Nigel had mixed feelings of guilt and relief every time he sought help from his fellow healthcare interns.

In a way, I feel relieved because I thought I wouldn't be so stressful, but then towards the end of the internship, I started to feel guilty and I forced myself to do more work to repay for their accommodation. (Nigel, a healthcare student, follow-up interview)

In various workplace situations, it was evident that translation was a necessary aid to avoid situations where potential miscommunication could happen, and to serve as an easy way out in terms of language problems. Translation was regarded by the SA interns as the key to overcoming this technical communication barrier. However, the more they rely on it, the more they think they are bringing trouble to their colleagues. Gradually, a psychological feeling of reliance is formed. To cope with the fluidities of work, a competent worker is expected to carry out tasks in an independent way, demonstrating the required level of language skills and tacit knowledge. Although local colleagues appeared to be “friendly”, “accommodating” and “helpful”, the SA interns identified negative emotional responses associated with their inadequate Chinese such as “guilt” and “grudging reliance” and believed they could competently perform their jobs if they had the necessary competence in Chinese.

In order not to cause inconvenience to local colleagues, one SA intern adopted a minimalist approach whenever she encountered language barriers with local people. This conservative language attitude is plainly manifested in the language habituation of Saman, a PR intern.

When they say things to you in Chinese, I can just reply “no”, “sorry” or “ok” or sometimes just smile. These are the best answers I can give and not to cause a mess. [...] I just say things like this to get out of the situation. I tend not to get too involved. Maybe I’m too hung up with making mistakes. (Saman, a PR student, follow-up interview)

This showed that without sufficient Chinese language abilities, SA interns failed to respond adequately and appropriately, answering in only monosyllabic words or simply non-verbal expressions. Whether too intimidated to approach Chinese-speaking service receivers or too embarrassed about making mistakes and asking for help from their colleagues, this affective barrier resulted from Chinese language shortcomings and prevented them from taking conversational initiatives.

5.4.3 Becoming a loser

In facing communication shortcomings, the SA interns often described themselves as complete losers. Adjectives used to portray this self-derogatory image included: frustrated, anxious, awkward, immature, incompetent, looked stupid, unprepared and unprofessional. Below are excerpts of Nigel, Bu and Anjali’s grievances about the inadequacy of their language functionality.

There’s one incident that when I walked to the [domestic] helper who was feeding an elderly lady, and I thought she could speak English. I walked up to her and told her we were from the Dietetic Department. She was just like “no, no, no”. [...] She then ignored me and talked to my colleague in Chinese. I was very **frustrated**. (Nigel, a healthcare student, post-diary debriefing)

I looked very **stupid** with my bad accent and mispronunciation of some words in front of them [junior kitchen staff]. This seriously affected my confidence as being a professional chef. (Bu, a culinary arts student, follow-up interview)

Even though I am confident that my spoken English is fluent, the bank staff still think I am some kind of a cheap working maid in Hong Kong. I feel that I have been treated as a non-local person. This is so **frustrating**. (Anjali, an accounting student, diary entry)

The frustration these SA interns felt could be seen in their diary entries. The chief element behind this affective barrier was the reduced control of work situations because of language barriers and the failure to protect their image as professionals in their chosen jobs. The findings here reveal that the need to learn a second language for vocational purposes derives from real-life language barriers and the corresponding feelings. Therefore, the design of a vocational Chinese language curriculum would give them necessary language skills that allow them to act professionally and emotionally controlled to overcome communication barriers without undue difficulties. A well-designed vocational Chinese curriculum would equip these SA interns with the necessary language skills to survive and perhaps flourish in their chosen professions. It would also assist them in overcoming both their negative feelings and low self-image.

5.4.4 Becoming “one of them”

Within this group of SA interns, most who were born locally expressed a notion of “doing as the Romans do”. Nigel, a healthcare student, rephrased this expression: “if one is living and working in Hong Kong, one should speak as Hong Kongers do”.

Well, I know that Hong Kong is an international financial city where many educated people can speak both English and Chinese, but maybe I tell them that I understand Chinese, so they will treat me like I’m a local. And they always use Chinese among themselves. (Nigel, a healthcare student, follow-up interview)

In Saman and Anjali’s linguistic encounters, not being able to speak the local language in the workplace was deemed as a representation of being impolite and disrespectful.

If I could say something to her in her own language, she [a local courier] would appreciate me more. I wish I could speak Chinese in reply. It’s more polite. (Saman, a PR student, post-diary debriefing)

I tried to speak very simple Cantonese, and she looked puzzled, so I just did some body language and smiled at her. [...] I felt a bit awkward because I was not able to converse with her in Cantonese. I hope she didn’t feel I was rude or disrespect or anything. (Anjali, an accounting student, diary entry)

From Saman and Anjali's point of view, language barriers make it difficult for them to show their respect to local work-related people. Dr Lee offered a similar viewpoint.

If EM employees educated locally can speak the local language and deal with these situations, they will be **looked upon**. [...] It's just like if you work in a foreign country, you are expected to speak the local language. [...] It would be an advantage for them to possess certain Chinese abilities useful in the workplace. At least they are expected to manage basic office amenities. This will make them look **more impressive** in front of their potential employers. (Dr Lee, Programme Leader of the BA in Public Relations and Management, triangulation interview)

The inability to communicate with local people in Chinese was thought to be an exhibition of antipathy against local Hong Kongers, especially Chinese-only speakers. For these interns to join the locals, the need for Chinese as a second language to be offered as a curriculum option in tertiary education for local South Asian students is paramount.

5.4.5 Becoming a redundant worker

Language barriers can lead to inefficiency of communication and ultimately low in productivity. There was a common feeling among the SA interns that not knowing Chinese would impair greatly their ability to give professional input and their self-esteem as well as sense of professionalism suffered.

They don't speak English and I don't speak Chinese, so I'm too hung up with my poor language skills in front of junior colleagues. Without understanding Chinese, I was in no position to supervise them. I couldn't shake the feeling that I am very **inadequate** and **inferior**. I'm so envious of other interns who can speak fluent Chinese. (Bu, a culinary arts student, follow-up interview)

There is no doubt that the lack of expected workplace language skills would make these interns less productive or perhaps inferior to their Chinese co-workers. For these interns to advance in their careers and to gain respect from others, they must attend a vocational Chinese course that will truly meet all their language needs. As a result, they could then gain recognition of their expertise and become vocationally successful in the future.

5.5 Chapter conclusion

The contextualised findings concerning language barriers and affective barriers discussed in this chapter have identified various workplace language activities that are highly dependent on verbal interactions and illustrated how, through exposure to and participation in such activities, these SA interns came to internalise target language learning needs for workplace communication in Hong Kong. It is important to understand the language situations and the language barriers SA university students are likely to encounter as working professionals; it is equally important to understand the affective feelings they have when they encounter these language barriers before true Chinese language needs can be interpreted and examined. Chapter Six will analyse what and how Chinese language needs are formed in respect of the aforementioned language and affective barriers encountered by the SA interns in the workplace.

Chapter Six – Chinese Language Needs in the Workplaces of Hong Kong

6.1 Introduction

The determination of the Chinese language needs of South Asian undergraduates in Hong Kong should reference real-life language encounters in local workplaces. These language needs exist as the result of a combination of factors, both external and internal, and for social and vocational purposes. This chapter addresses the third research question that relates to the Chinese language needs made evident by the internship experiences of THEi's SA students. These were explored through their written diaries and subsequent interview accounts and then categorised according to Hutchinson and Waters' target needs analysis model, a learner-centred approach that investigates *Necessities*, *Lacks* and *Wants* in the target communicative situations. The analysis of qualitative data resulted in several major findings regarding the target language needs the participating SA undergraduates had in the local workplace discourse.

The analysis of target needs is concerned with how Chinese language is used and thus involves the identification of particular linguistic areas that the SA interns found they needed (*Necessities*), but did not know or possess (*Lacks*), and therefore felt in need of (*Wants*) (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987). The following sections illustrate indexical responses of these participating student interns with reference to the above-mentioned three needs parameters, which were compared, contrasted and triangulated with the data collected through the focus groups of pre-internship SA students of THEi and individual face-to-face interviews of relevant stakeholders. Each section is also complemented by a thorough discussion on the significance of these findings.

6.2 Necessities

According to Hutchinson and Waters (1987), *Necessities* are the language abilities that the L2 learner has to possess in order to function effectively in the target situation. In this sense, *Necessities* are essential rather than simply desirable language needs. Below are the language areas crucial for SA interns to perform well in the required workplace activities.

6.2.1 Speaking skills

As far as *Necessities* are concerned, the most frequent comments made by the SA interns concerned the requirement of speaking skills for both internal and external oral communication. The language experience of Bu, a culinary arts intern working with kitchen staff in an American-cuisine restaurant, best reflected the universal

expectation of this language requirement.

I needed to know each specific item on the plate so I asked him [a newly arrived head chef]. As he was explaining in Chinese, I couldn't understand some parts, so I asked him again, and he was like "I thought you knew Chinese." His tone indicated that he had an expectation that I'm very fluent in Chinese. (Bu, a culinary arts student, diary entry)

This speaking ability was expected by not just local colleagues, but also local service recipients. Saman recognised this, reporting her feeling as follows:

I don't feel so shocked when Chinese clients speak Chinese to me because a lot of people like me were born here and they can speak Chinese. They [local people] assume that I can speak Chinese. (Saman, a public relations student, follow-up interview)

Nigel further illustrated that Hong Kong people could actually feel "intimidated" when he spoke to them in English. He was even rejected by a domestic helper, who was likely from the Philippines or Indonesia.

There's one incident that when I walked to the [domestic] helper who was feeding an elderly lady, and I thought she could speak English. I walked up to her and told her we were from the Dietetic Department. She was just like "no, no, no". (Nigel, a healthcare student, post-diary debriefing)

In the local workplace, there were frequent communicative tasks which required oral communication as the only direct way of making contact with local people. In such situations, Cantonese is the dominant language of choice. Employees are required to demonstrate a very good command of spoken communication skills so as to perform their job duties effectively, especially when interacting with local colleagues, clients or customers. Ms Cheung, an accounts manager, has noticed a switch of lingua franca from English to Chinese for the accounting industry over the last decade.

English in the accounting sector was the business language 10 years ago, but in recent years, Chinese has become important in the workplace. I think this is largely because of the mother-tongue teaching policy, and I have seen local fresh graduates who possess better Chinese skills than English. So, Chinese is used in communication, both internally and externally. (Ms Cheung, an

Ms Cheung and Ms Lo further reported that regardless of their appearance and traditional outfits, locally-educated SA employees were expected to have good verbal skills to converse professionally with different individuals in the business sector in Hong Kong. Dr Lee, Programme Leader of the BA in Public Relations and Management, and Mr Leung, Internship Coordinator of the BA in Hotel Operations and Management, offered the same viewpoint. This upsurge in speaking Chinese in workplace situations could be contributed by the impact of the Bilingualism and Trilingualism Policy and the Mother-tongue Language Policy implemented by the EDB (refer to Chapter One – Introduction). University graduates nowadays should be competent to write in Chinese and English, and to speak fluent Cantonese, Mandarin/Putonghua and English. In terms of the expectations of those who have a non-Chinese background, speaking seems to come first.

There is no escape from using Chinese even when working in international companies in Hong Kong. Saman and Anjali had their internships in foreign companies where their non-Chinese speaking colleagues habitually assigned them to deal with businesses or daily operations involving external parties including monolingual Cantonese clients and daily service personnel such as couriers and repairmen. However, their insufficient Chinese language abilities often led to miscommunication, as noted in Section 5.3.2 – Language barriers to effective communication.

It could be a sign of stereotyping in the local workplace. Western colleagues tend to assume that their Asian counterparts all possess similar traits and thus use these category-based expectations to guide their workplace interactions with them. In other words, whenever monolingual Chinese individuals were involved, western colleagues would rely on SA interns to deal with them because of this over-simplifying of cultural background, i.e. Chinese and South Asians both belong to some homogenous undefined Asian grouping. This linguistic expectation was further substantiated by the interview with Dr Lee.

There are always occasions when speaking Chinese is required even in an international company where English is widely spoken. They [SA students] really need Chinese skills, you know. Even though all the staff in the company use English for communication all the time, what if there is a time when a local technician comes to fix a broken photocopier or a local courier delivers something to the office, they might not know English. If EM [ethnic

minority) employees educated locally can speak the local language and deal with these situations, they will be looked upon [favourably] . (Dr Lee, Programme Leader of the BA in Public Relations and Management, triangulation interview)

As the above accounts suggested, speaking seemed to be the most frequently required ability for employees with an ethnic minority background in local job settings. This aligned with the findings of previous overseas studies on L2 needs analysis (Huang, 2014, Sarawit, 2008). Other language skills such as reading emerged as relatively less important in terms of employers' and organisations' expectations. In situations where textual communication such as emails and notices was needed, SA interns like Anjali, Nigel and Kurt would habitually resolve their language barriers by using Google Translate to anglicise Chinese messages or by seeking direct assistance from their local counterparts. This, too, aligned with the local literature on ethnic minority education that the development of speaking skills ranked as a top priority with reading skills as the next focus point of language training (Kam, 2003, Ku and Wong, 2008). Ranking reading above listening skills is somewhat problematic insofar as speaking and listening are complementary skills. Perhaps these students did not make this connection that speaking is, in practice, totally reliant on good listening abilities.

6.2.2 Use of professional terminology as a reflection of content knowledge

Besides language skills, content knowledge was also deemed essential for workplace communication. Generally speaking, content knowledge denotes the facts, concepts, theories and principles that are taught and learned in subject-specific courses, rather than to related language skills—such as speaking, listening, reading and writing—that students also learn in school. As suggested in the findings, content knowledge here referred to the use of vocabulary related to a particular subject area in which SA interns were majored.

When asked what types of language knowledge were important for them to perform well in their jobs, the most frequent replies concerned professional terminology. SA students prioritised the use of professional terminology at the top of their list, calling it different names such as *jargon*, *special vocabulary* and *technical words*. Many of them reasoned that using jargon was essential for effective communication in professional activities.

I took the patient out for anthropometric measurements like checking his height, weight, BMI, and then wrote down all the measurement results. The

patient asked me what were these check-up activities called and I paused for 2 seconds and then answered “Ng Chee” [don’t know] . I felt I was so unprofessional. He had the right to know. (Nigel, a healthcare student, post-diary debriefing)

It was necessary to have knowledge of the vocabulary used in a specialist area for engaging in discussions as well as deciphering spoken messages about work-related topics. Without the ability to immediately access professional lexis, SA interns could not hope to achieve the spontaneous responses necessary for fluent interaction with local colleagues and service recipients. In addition, jargon, if used in the right context, could give a good impression not only of sounding professional and credible, but also to achieve a social-psychological effect to secure an in-group position (see more in Section 6.4 – Wants).

6.2.3 Socio-linguistic knowledge

Still important but less frequent is the need for possessing socio-linguistic knowledge to understand the socio-cultural meanings of utterances spoken in the informal workplace context. Everyday language such as colloquialisms, idioms and slang constitutes part of this knowledge. An insight was gained from the diaries of SA interns on how important socio-linguistic knowledge could be to facilitate trustful collegial communication at the workplace. Bu gained satisfaction from a sense of in-group membership due to her language competence in understanding local slang and swear words (Li, 2016).

Kitchen staff like gossiping when they don’t have work to do. I’m happy that I could gossip and swear with my local kitchen staff. I can see that they are quite comfortable when talking to me. (Bu, a culinary arts student, follow-up interview)

Viewed as an essential indicator of fluency in Chinese, Bu acknowledged that it was necessary to be familiar with and ready to use colloquial expressions for easy access to the local working community and ultimately to achieve better integration. That this was another language factor that could encourage in-group membership was supported by Dr Lee’s account.

In my husband’s company, there is an Indian man, who I think is a second or third generation immigrant. He cannot read and write Chinese, but he can speak Cantonese fluently. He can still get along with local staff really well. He

is good at using foul language too. So they swear a lot and mix well in the office. (Dr Lee, Programme Leader of the BA in Public Relations and Management, triangulation interview)

The above quotes indicated that there was a necessity for SA interns who may have possessed some degree of linguistic competence to learn a full stock of socio-linguistic codes and rules for speaking the Chinese language in various social workplace contexts, so as to foster healthy social relationships with local colleagues.

6.3 Lacks

According to Hutchinson and Waters (1987), *Lacks* are the gap between *Necessities* and an L2's existing language proficiency. While the job positions and the contexts requiring language skills and linguistic knowledge may vary, the job tasks SA interns were expected to undertake very often involved the use of appropriate communicative strategies. This section presents the pragmatic skills SA interns lacked for effectively engaging in oral communicative events in the local workplace settings.

6.3.1 Pragmatic skills

Having good language skills alone may not be enough to function well in local job settings. Certain pragmatic aspects of language use are also important, and without them, misunderstandings and miscommunication in workplace discourse are bound to arise. The diary records of SA interns showed that they had encountered pragmatic difficulties in using appropriate language for vocational and social interactions, resulting in negative effects on themselves and those they were communicating with.

As noted in the diaries, negotiating issues connected with the appropriate use of formal and informal language often proved tricky. The following statement from Anjali acknowledged her awkwardness in greeting and initiating conversations with her monolingual Chinese co-workers.

There was a cleaning lady at work and she completely does not know English. She can only speak Chinese. Since I was new, I wanted to greet her and introduce myself but I know that the way I speak is like I'm reading. I did try, but I don't think she could understand my Chinese. It's way too formal in this situation. At the end, I just gave her a friendly smile. (Anjali, an accounting student, post-diary debriefing)

The setting of this first-time meeting between the SA intern and the janitor revealed the degree of formality. The use of informal Chinese seemed appropriate for the establishment of friendly work relationships and future solidarity. However, another SA intern, Nigel, was unable to use formal Chinese to communicate with a patient that he had met for the first time.

As I approached one particular patient in the palliative-care ward to ask some questions, the patient looked depressed. He seemed hopeless because he showed a very pessimistic ideology in his answers and kept mentioning he was helpless. I felt a dying urge to try to keep him optimistic, but I was held back by my Chinese language. I later felt upset because the level of my spoken Chinese was not appropriate enough to help cheer the patient up. The only thing I could do in response was to say some simple words, but then I just listened and nodded my head. (Nigel, a healthcare student, diary entry)

In a post-diary interview, Nigel revealed that the simple words he uttered to comfort the patient were “mou5 si6 gei3” (You will be fine.), “m4 hou2 daam1 sam1” (Don’t worry.) and “m4 hou2 lam2 gam3 do1” (Don’t think too much.). He further explained that he had done his very best trying to use as many comforting words and phrases as possible, but still he could tell his linguistic and pragmatic devices were superficial and thus not effective at all. This also explained the reason for his subsequent silence. For serious situations like this, it would be appropriate if one could convey professional knowledge through the use of formal language.

As non-native speakers of Chinese, some SA interns like Anjali and Nigel were well aware of the need for using appropriate levels of language formality, while others would tend to compensate with physical expressions and gestures such as smiling and nodding or even remaining silent when encountering situations wherein potential mistakes were likely to be made due to a lack of pragmatic competence. Another communicative failure arose in Saman’s language encounter. She was puzzled by some local pest control technicians who kept apologising to her.

So they [pest control technicians] were waiting outside in the waiting area and 5 minutes later, they came in and said “sorry”. But [at that time] the CEO started having lunch. They pointed at his lunch and said “sorry, lunchy” and [there is] something that I couldn’t understand. Then they finished spraying and when they were leaving, they apologised many times by saying “sorry” again. But what for? (Saman, a public relations student, post-diary debriefing)

Effective language use in workplaces is to some extent affected by limited socio-pragmatic knowledge. In fact, there are three different meanings of the word “sorry” in Chinese, namely, (1) to apologise and defuse a situation where you admit your mistake, (2) to express guilt for some trouble or an embarrassment about an inconvenience that you cause, and (3) to politely excuse or seek attention from others. In Saman’s situation, the pest control technicians said the first “sorry” to draw attention to their late arrival whereas the second “sorry” was to indicate the inconvenience that they had caused to the CEO during lunch time. Communication awkwardness could happen due to the transfer of inappropriate norms of language from the learner’s linguistic knowledge of English, and misconceptions about the pragmatic knowledge of Chinese. To understand whether the utterance of “sorry” is an apology, an indication of causing trouble or an attention seeker, SA interns need to interpret the true meaning of “sorry” in relation to the pragmatic context they are in, thus preventing misinterpretation of communicative intentions.

Linguistic competence does not equate to pragmatic competence. Oftentimes, the consequence of making pragmatic errors is more serious than making grammatical errors. An environmental engineering student, Kurt, who self-rated his Chinese language abilities as “good”, failed to respond to his supervisor’s comments on the questionnaire he had designed.

She [Supervisor] said “ok” and “gei2 hou2” (pretty good) and asked me if I had time, I could re-think about the choice of words used in the questions. A few days later she asked me for a revised version and I didn’t do it. She commented my work “good” and I thought “good” meant no revision was needed. But at the end, I realised she wasn’t satisfied with the wordings in the questionnaire and wanted me to somehow use the words that could lead the respondents to tick the answers she would like to have. (Kurt, an environmental engineering student, post-diary debriefing)

This was again a misinterpretation indicating the fact that some of the SA interns could only understand the literary meaning of Chinese words, but might not know how to interpret them correctly in the pragmatic context. It was obvious that Kurt did not perceive his factual inability to use pragmatic aspects of Chinese to generate functional and socially appropriate communication with his supervisor. Other findings also showed that SA interns often had problems with workplace communicative events involving the area of pragmatics such as apologising, greeting, requesting,

inviting, informing, complimenting, persuading, negotiating, and initiating, ending and managing turns in conversations.

Misunderstanding and miscommunication resulting from insufficient pragmatic language skills could be seen as a predictor of employment incompetence and workplace behaviours that negatively impact on social acceptance and psychological well-being. Learning to be a competent user of the Chinese language involved sensitising and developing pragmatic competence across different registers and contexts, and appropriacy and accuracy determined SA employees' success in communicative-interactional practices in the local workplace.

6.3.2 Pronunciation and tones

Cantonese is a tonal language so if a word is pronounced in a different tone, it may have a totally different meaning. Hence, speaking with correct pronunciation and tones was identified as another language lack among some SA interns. Bu showed a representative example of how incorrect pronunciation could trigger laughter, if not ridicule, when it was associated with funny meanings.

I think my pronunciation is weird. The chefs and kitchen staff say I have a funny accent that makes them laugh, and sometimes guests will laugh too especially when I introduce dishes and explain food ingredients. I can tell they often try to hold their laughs. (Bu, a culinary arts student, follow-up interview)

Bu later found out the reason for her guests to burst out laughing when she was introducing to them the chef's recommended dish "stir-fried crab with garlic and chili". The dish "caau2 haai5"⁴ (fried crab) she mispronounced was heard as different words associated with the meaning of female genitals, which were considered highly offensive swearwords.

Clearly however, there is potential for far more serious consequences. For example, Bu's embarrassment caused by this mispronunciation may not be perceived as serious by Nigel and Mike. In fact, the two health-related practitioners had a more worrying concern about correct sounds and tones because their major job duty was to ask patients questions in order to make a precise medical assessment. Any phonological mistake was likely to be critical.

⁴ "caau2 haai5", literally frying crabs, sounds very similar to "cau3hai1" that refers to a smelly vagina and is considered to be highly offensive.

6.3.3 Chinese word processing skills

The last language lack identified in the internship experience of SA students related to Chinese word processing skills for written job tasks such as writing emails to monolingual Chinese clients and inputting information on e-forms for internal use. As noted above (Section 6.2 – Necessities), hardly any of the SA interns recognised the importance of reading and writing skills. It is no surprise given the fact that the uniquely complex calligraphy of Chinese characters to be recognised and produced (Sung and Tsai, 2014, Tsung et al., 2010). The SA students responded to this level of difficulty by underemphasising the importance of acquiring these skills.

However, with the rapid development of information technology, electronic communication is so pervasive that it has impacted on all industries and sectors. Although these SA interns perceived that speaking was a more important and urgent language need, a few of them did realise they would sometimes have to communicate in writing electronically, necessitating typing skills in Chinese which they lacked. Kurt stated that working on the computer in Chinese occupied a great deal of his time because every job task in his office was digitalised. As for SA interns with poor word recognition and production, Google Translate helped resolve their problems. Anjali shared her experience in using this online translation tool.

My boss [from India] asked me to type some Chinese words. I spent quite some time to do that using Google Translate. It's a bit time-consuming to use Google Translate because I need to convert English meanings to Chinese characters, but I'm used to doing it. In the long run, I should know how to type Chinese. (Anjali, an accounting student, diary entry)

For situations when written communication was inevitable, most of the SA interns like Anjali would tackle the language barrier with Google Translate by first typing in an English message in the source language box, then copying the Chinese translation text in the target language box, and finally pasting it onto emails or other forms of electronic documents. This indicated that some SA interns were conscious of the changing nature of the communication medium in the workplace and the resulting language requirements.

6.4 Wants

According to Hutchinson and Waters (1987), *Wants* are the learner's subjective desires, which may not have a direct relationship with the objective needs perceived by other stakeholders such as teachers, syllabus designers and employers. It was observed that the findings of *Wants* were not concrete occupational language needs existing in reality, but rather an ideal psychological state of the learners' personal image in association with career aspiration and the linguistic norm of the workplace. The three language-driven desires observed and manifested through the diaries and verbatim accounts of the SA interns researched are described below.

6.4.1 Desire for security

Residing in a competitive society like Hong Kong, the SA diarists were focally aware of the job insecurity arising from their weak Chinese language abilities. Their desire for security was underpinned by two concerns: unemployment after graduation and career development after employment. Mike's anxiety relates to the former concern.

I felt that I wasn't doing my duties as a sports therapist. I know a lot of companies in Hong Kong are listing bilingual language abilities as a job requirement. This means that if students like me are not competent in both Chinese and English, the chances of getting hired are very low. I am so **worried about being jobless**. You know, I will be in Year 4 [final year] soon. (Mike, a sports therapist student, follow-up interview)

As shown in the findings presented in Chapter Four, unemployment after graduation is a major worry of these SA interns on the one hand, and post-employment survival in the Chinese-dominant work environment on the other. Chapter Five described how common speaking Chinese was in the local job settings and the lack thereof would likely affect promotion opportunities and ultimately impact career development. As a SA university student, Kurt shared a common feeling of being linguistically handicapped in the eyes of local employers:

There are a lot of infrastructure projects in China and big companies like Gammon hire Hong Kong engineers, especially fresh graduates, to station in Macau and Guangdong to oversee development projects. We never get assigned to do such projects because we look like a **deaf-mute**. So we will definitely be limited by not being able to use Chinese. (Kurt, an environmental engineering student, follow-up interview)

There is no doubt that fluency in two or more languages can open up many more job opportunities not meant for monolingual job seekers. In the case of SA university graduates, proficiency in Chinese could provide an additional advantage, making them more effective communicators compared to their local counterparts who appeared to shy away from foreigners. Dr Lee offered the following view.

SA students are comparatively good at English. If they can speak fluently in Chinese, many career advancing opportunities may come up. In the PR industry, employees with a multilingual and multicultural background are likely to be the most favoured or attractive candidates to get a promotion for senior positions because they are linguistically-responsive and thus good at liaising with overseas clients. These extra job responsibilities could translate into **job security** and **career boost**. (Dr Lee, Programme Leader of the BA in Public Relations and Management, triangulation interview)

Overall, SA interns appeared to have an understanding that English alone did not suffice to consolidate their future employment or sustain their career advancement if they opted to work in Hong Kong after graduation. Hence, their sense of job insecurity was rooted in their Chinese language incompetence. Even as prospective university graduates, they considered their career prospects dim and felt the only remedy was strengthening their own Chinese language competence. Besides job security, social inclusion and integration is another theme that frequently emerged.

6.4.2 Desire for social inclusion and integration

As revealed in Chapter Five, communication barriers resulted in institutional segregation. Because SA interns were linguistically disadvantaged, they were unable to enjoy social work life. Thus they longed for social contentment, a desire shaped by an imagined state where their Chinese language abilities would allow them to mingle with locals. For example, Mike remarked: “〔 If I am able to speak Chinese, 〕 I can connect with local colleagues and get into their friend zone.” Anjali, who worked with only two people: her Indian boss and a cleaning lady, said: “I felt lonely and I’m sure the cleaning lady felt the same too.” This showed that the use of Chinese was not just for work-related issues but sometimes for social networking needs. “Making friends”, “engaging in casual conversations” and “gossiping at work” best described this kind of desire for the establishment of social relationships with local colleagues and work-related individuals. However, their perceived inadequate and inappropriate language skills for everyday informal social interactions would deny them this kind of social inclusion in the workplace.

There was more involved than inclusion at other times. Some SA interns also wanted to be integrated in the community. Earning respect was another recurring theme. Saman wrote: “If I was able to express thankfulness in Chinese to the locals, I would be **respected**.” Nigel echoed this sentiment:

Well, I know that Hong Kong is an international financial city where many educated people can speak both English and Chinese, but maybe if I tell them that I understand Chinese, they will treat me like I’m a local. I think we feel that it’s more **respectful** if we can speak Chinese. And if we do, the locals will **respect** us more. (Nigel, a healthcare student, follow-up interview)

The frequent use of “if-conditionals” in the diaries was revealing. In addition to being able to speak the local language, accents could act as a symbol of belongingness. Usually, the negative feeling of foreignness would be counterbalanced if SA interns had a native-like accent. Kurt exemplified this point:

I remember on the first day at work, my colleagues invited me to have lunch together. They asked why my name was so “strange” and if I was a “non-local”. My boss asked them to make a guess at my ethnicity, and I told them I’m a mixed, Nepalese and Turkish. They felt very shocked, and wondered how come I could **speak like a local Hong Konger**. Since then, we’ve got along quite well and sometimes hung out together after work. (Kurt, an environmental engineering student, follow-up interview)

The findings here aligned with the research studies on second language acquisition reviewed in Chapter Two which had shown that the learning of the local language by minority language groups played a significant role for the integration into the host society (Dagher and D’Netto, 1997, Deresky, 2000, Lee, 2001, Lim and Alum, 1995). The third common theme that emerged from the language experiences during the internship was the desire for self-esteem.

6.4.3 Desire for self-esteem

Frequent emotional lows would contribute to diminished self-esteem. It was evident that the participating SA interns often found themselves dealing with a challenging emotional journey in various job settings, often because of their fundamental linguistic needs remaining unfulfilled. Two major factors, negative emotional conditions and self-beliefs, emerged through the analysis of student diaries and interviews.

- Negative emotional conditions

Self-esteem could be affected by frustration, nervousness, fear and anxiety. These negative emotions commonly reported by the SA interns may gradually form a self-image that is dominated by their poor Chinese language performance. Some SA interns reported that they had found communication breakdowns extremely stressful and that such situations provoked a great deal of anxiety. Saman was the most affected among her fellow SA students.

So that kind of anxiety wouldn't exist if I could speak some Chinese. And also when I have to talk to people about things, for example, going to a restaurant, I have special dietary needs, so I need to communicate with them, ask them what is in the food, so that kind of anxiety would exist and perhaps I would be going out more. I have...it's something personal...I have **anxiety disorder**...I was diagnosed last year. I'm ok now. But still I try to avoid things that would make me anxious. (Saman, a public relations student, follow-up interview)

Negative workplace and social events that SA students failed to handle with their Chinese language abilities could lead to anxiety. In the scenario above, foreign language anxiety stemmed from communication apprehension, i.e., Saman did not possess adequate productive and receptive skills to handle target language situations.

- Self-beliefs

Self-esteem encompasses beliefs about oneself. Professional linguistic competence goes beyond the mere production of language. It also includes the satisfaction the learner gains from work life, such as self-confidence, recognition, accountability and ultimately self-achievement. Selected quotes illustrating SA interns' perceptions of their own self-beliefs were "I want to be competent."; "I hope my colleagues will think that I am worthy."; and "I should be held accountable." More importantly, a sense of achievement grew alongside the learning of the Chinese language, as captured by the comments of Kurt.

I feel a great sense of achievement. Many local people think that it is a basic language ability when it comes to working, but as an ethnic minority resident in Hong Kong, especially I look differently, this language ability is not basic to me. (Kurt, an environmental engineering student, follow-up interview)

Kurt's self-esteem derived from the self-evaluation he made of his job accomplishment, made possible by his Chinese language competence. This also suggests that the development of self-esteem could be restricted by a lack of language proficiency. Self-esteem was seen as a significant by-product of language because if this need was not satisfied, successful professional performance would not be possible.

To conclude this section, it was noteworthy that SA students' Chinese language needs were not merely a set of workplace communication abilities but also a mix of affective states such as a sense of security, a sense of inclusion in the workplace community and a sense of self-esteem. Prior literature on Hutchinson and Waters' target needs analysis model tended to focus on the language needs separately, as if each of the three needs exists as an independent item. However, as the analysis of the present research findings proceeded, it revealed that the language needs of *Necessities*, *Lacks* and *Wants* existed in relation to one another, i.e. *Necessities* arose according to the job requirements and workplace settings; *Lacks* referred to self-aware language deficiencies in that physical environment; and *Wants* stemmed from a desire for psychological betterment through the required language abilities. When closely examined, *Necessities* seemed to be fundamental for the SA interns to survive in the local workplace, and only when *Necessities* were satisfied, *Wants* would possibly be reached. What emerged was a progressively relational need translated from *Necessities* to *Wants* and this research would name it "*Wanecessities*".

6.5 Chapter conclusion

Through the application of Hutchinson and Waters' needs analysis, this chapter has presented the three language needs of SA university students (*Necessities*, *Lacks* and *Wants*) as they apply to the workplaces of Hong Kong, encompassing not only linguistic needs such as spoken language skills, professional terminology, different types of socio-linguistic, pragmatic and phonological knowledge for specific communicative situations, but also affective desires for job security and sustainability, social inclusion and integration, and emotional wellness. Chapter Seven will (1) summarise the key findings, (2) highlight the original contribution to knowledge made by this exploratory study, and (3) conclude the whole thesis by addressing research limitations and providing recommendations for future research directions.

Chapter Seven – Concluding Remarks

Nowadays living and working in Hong Kong, a society with an increasing emphasis on biliteral and trilingual competence, employees who fail to demonstrate proficiency in Chinese would compromise their work performance and in the long run undermine their chance of career advancement. It is evident from recent literature that ethnic minority employees in Hong Kong with limited Chinese have encountered barriers across a range of spheres in local job settings including communication, promotion opportunities, work performance and social participation (Baig, 2012, Erni and Leung, 2014, Li and Chuk, 2015, Mathews, 2011, O'Connor, 2010). All these obstacles stem from their low language proficiency in the Chinese language. Therefore, behind the search for the language needs of SA undergraduate students in Hong Kong, the complexity of language use and the resultant barriers in the local workplace have been the guiding themes underlying this exploratory research study. In this concluding chapter, I will summarise key research findings, highlight original contributions to knowledge, and address the implications and limitations of this exploratory study.

7.1 Summary of key findings and original contribution to knowledge

Before I give a summary of the key findings, let us revisit the three research questions posed in Chapter One, as follows:

1. What are the Chinese language learning experiences of South Asian undergraduate students in relation to the educational, political and socio-economic contexts of Hong Kong?
2. What are the language barriers experienced by South Asian undergraduate students during their internships in the local workplace?
3. What are the resulting Chinese language needs of South Asian undergraduate students?

7.1.1 Rationalised assumption of not using Chinese in the future workplace

The majority of the SA undergraduate students at the Technological and Higher Education Institute of Hong Kong (THEi) agree that learning the Chinese language is conducive to brighter career prospects along with better inclusion in the classroom and integration in the society as a whole. However, some of them, though educated locally, have laboured under the incorrect assumption that English is widely used as a lingua franca in Hong Kong, Asia's pre-eminent financial hub. Their rationalised assumption possibly originates from the fact that most of the Caucasian, Japanese and Korean residents in Hong Kong have weak or even non-existent Chinese language

skills and yet they are able to survive and indeed thrive in the local workplace using English as the only means of communication. In addition, tertiary institutes admitting these SA students as international students exempt them from taking Chinese language courses, further leading them to self-identify themselves as belonging to a generic category of ethnic minorities in the government context (Census and Statistics Department, 2015) or to the non-Chinese speaking community in the educational context (Education Bureau, 2012). Therefore, they see learning Chinese as an added advantage but not a necessity, believing that good English alone will ensure their survival in this so-called international city. Their wishful thinking would later be proved otherwise when they engaged in their internship activities at the predominantly ethnic Chinese workplace of Hong Kong.

7.1.2 Prevalence of Chinese in the real-world work environment

It is revealed in this study that Chinese as a medium of communication is now a commonplace in many job settings of Hong Kong, particularly in local small-to-medium-sized companies where daily business interactions are closely linked with the domestic and mainland markets. This makes Chinese language proficiency an important performance indicator but most SA university graduates fall far short of the required level. In line with the findings of other needs analysis studies on second language learning (Huang, 2014, Kam, 2003, Ku and Wong, 2008, Sarawit, 2008), this study recorded frequent spoken interactions with locals in workplace contexts and therefore speaking skills are perceived to be more urgently needed than other language skills such as writing. For SA interns, enhanced speaking abilities will not only allow them to avoid miscommunication, but also foster trustful work relationships with their fellow workers and service recipients. This study also unexpectedly identified the phenomenon of western senior colleagues tending to rely on their SA counterparts for handling daily business operations involving monolingual Chinese work-related personnel, assuming that since their SA colleagues are locally born and educated, they will be able to use Chinese. The Biliteracy and Trilingualism Policy and the Mother-tongue Language Policy implemented by the EDB could have played a role in this phenomenon too.

7.1.3 Grudging reliance on language assistance and the resulting mixed feelings

The findings of this study have revealed that whenever SA freshmen have communication problems related to the use of Chinese, they tend to seek translation help from their local fellow students, and that this is habit-forming with this kind of language assistance being habitually sought from local bilingual colleagues. Gradually however, contradictory feelings emerge, i.e. on one hand they feel relieved

that language aid can be solicited from their bilingual colleagues, while on the other hand they feel guilty about the additional burden they place on their fellow workers.

7.1.4 Chinese Language needs for local SA undergraduate students

This exploratory study has adopted the needs analysis methodology designed by Hutchinson and Waters (1987) to look at the language “*Necessities*”, “*Lacks*” and “*Wants*” of SA tertiary students when they engaged in internships in various workplaces of Hong Kong. The language needs that emerged in this research are consistent with the ones identified by Kam (2003) as well as Wong and Lin (2014) on the employment and workplace situations of EM workers. All the participating SA interns have realised that the use of Chinese is inescapable in daily workplace communication, and thus recognised the need for improving their Chinese language skills. Oral communication events have been recorded more frequently than written ones, indicating that SA employees are required to handle jobs tasks that involve frequent speaking interactions. This finding is, in general, consonant with past studies about the importance of good oral communication skills for second language users in the target job settings (HKSAR, 2015, Kam, 2003, Sarawit, 2008). This study also yielded new findings regarding the use of professional terminology and socio-linguistic knowledge in spoken utterances. These, too, are valued as core language necessities by some of the SA interns who became highly aware of their importance when they failed to perform their job duties well. This awareness is later translated into the “*Wants*”.

7.1.5 Interrelations between “*Necessities*” and “*Wants*”

In general, past studies of language needs analysis tend to focus on addressing the questions of language needs that target students will have, as if these needs co-exist separately (Huang, 2014, Jasso-Aguilar, 1999, Rajprasit et al., 2014, Spence and Liu, 2013, Sung and Tsai, 2014, Talif and Noor, 2009, Wong and Lin, 2014). However, the assumption of one-directional analysis in these studies has blurred the crux of true language learning needs. The notion of L2 needs should not be restricted to the issue of what language abilities and skills the learners are supposed to have, but should encompass the affective desires propelled by their idealised target language competence. This research has empirically established a contextual perspective that foregrounds the interrelations between “*Necessities*” and “*Wants*” in the target user’s language environment, as coined by the researcher “*Wanecessities*” - a progressively relational need translated from “*Necessities*” to “*Wants*”. Needless to say, communication is an important functioning tool in the workplace. The internship experiences of the SA students have evidenced how the lack of necessary Chinese

language skills could lead to communication breakdowns and at the same time a number of affective reactions such as fear, anxiety and inferiority. Affective desires including job security, social acceptance and self-esteem are subsequently developed as the by-products of language proficiency.

7.1.6 Original contribution to knowledge

In addition to the findings presented above, this thesis has contributed to the following scholarly areas in relation to ethnic minority education, in particular learning Chinese as a second language.

The underexplored: South Asian undergraduate students as research participants

Every year, only a small number of South Asian secondary school leavers are deemed academically suitable for admission to undergraduate degree programmes offered by UGC-funded universities; the number who manage to secure a place in self-financing tertiary institutes such as THEi is smaller still. As a result, local research studies targeting these less-than-competent students are scarce. It is from this exclusive group that my research participants are drawn for investigation into their language experiences while using Chinese in the workplace of Hong Kong. This empirical study seeks to fill this research gap.

The knowledge gap: Literature on tertiary education for ethnic minorities

This thesis has critically reviewed prior research studies on the issues that home-grown ethnic minority students are facing in both the tertiary education landscape and the labour market of Hong Kong. With all these issues taken into consideration, the present empirical study has identified and juxtaposed the needs of learning Chinese from the L2 learner's perspective. In doing so, the findings have debunked a myopic view of how ethnic minority undergraduate students perceive the importance of learning the Chinese language for vocational purposes, thereby supporting and strengthening the domestic discourse of ethnic minority education.

A missing link in Hutchinson and Waters' target needs analysis theory

Prior studies on Hutchinson and Waters' target needs analysis tended to focus on their language needs (*Necessities*, *Lacks* and *Wants*) separately, as if each of the three needs co-exists as an independent item. This research has empirically established a contextual perspective that foregrounds the interrelations between "*Necessities*" and "*Wants*" in the target user's language environment, as coined by the researcher "*Wanecessities*", which denotes a progressively relational need translated from "*Necessities*" to "*Wants*".

Methodological invention for conducting needs analysis research

Studies on needs analysis can be done quantitatively and qualitatively. However, needs analysis is generally qualitative in nature because it aims to explore and interpret what the needs of learners are. To this end, a diary-interview method was employed in order to identify what actual language needs South Asian undergraduates would have for their future employment in the predominantly Chinese workplace of Hong Kong. Six SA undergraduate students were successfully recruited and participated in this exploratory qualitative study in which they were required to write diaries to record any language encounters during their internship engagements at various local workplaces. This allowed me to gain deep and thick insights about the language events and experiences in-the-moment and in a context that might be difficult to obtain by other qualitative research instruments, given the available resources and constraints (e.g. time and geography).

7.2 Recommendations

Language learners will benefit most if their acute language needs are well understood and astutely articulated. One of the recommendations this study puts forward is the design of a curriculum for teaching and learning Chinese as a second language for SA undergraduate students, with an aim to respond appropriately to their clamour for diverse language needs in the predominantly-ethnic Chinese workplace of Hong Kong.

7.2.1 Design of a CSL curriculum: Setting the ball rolling at THEi

For curriculum designers, the findings of this study could provide some insights for practical language education for learners of Chinese as a second language for occupational purposes in Hong Kong. To this end, this study suggests that self-financing tertiary institutes like THEi should be directed at developing a CSL curriculum suitable for home-grown ethnic minority students to gain desired competence in Chinese. If the ultimate education goal of THEi is to prepare its students to become work-ready in order to participate effectively in the local workforce and to make meaningful economic contributions to society, THEi should make good use of the practical findings of this research to design a Chinese language curriculum that can truly and adequately cater for the vocational language needs of its South Asian undergraduate students so that they can communicate, integrate and interact better in the Chinese-dominant workplace of Hong Kong. Taking into consideration the “*Wanecessities*”, one of the objectives of this curriculum should be to build up both linguistic competence and language confidence that will enable SA students to not only perform well, but to do so with full confidence that their linguistic

competence will facilitate integration and collegiality in the future workplace.

7.2.2 Development of a CSL curriculum: teaching and learning content

Crucially, discipline-specific vocabulary frequently used for technical communication in the workplace should be taught to SA students so that they will have a functional level of language automaticity at their disposal. This is the ability they need for engaging in professional communication and being recognised as professionals. Social communication is also important as workplaces are constituted in socially embedded communicative practices and poor communication abilities in Chinese can affect the social dimension hidden behind the lingua franca of the workplace. Hence, it is recommended that socio-linguistic knowledge in the spoken format should also be introduced to prepare SA students for dynamic social interactions within the workplace. Being able to engage in conversations on daily trivialities in Chinese may help enhance intimacy and bonding with local colleagues, ultimately promoting a stronger sense of belonging. Finally, in terms of pronunciation accuracy, a fundamental understanding of vowel and consonant sound production and patterns of tones in Cantonese should be introduced to increase these students' confidence in speaking in a variety of job settings.

As for SA individuals, poor Chinese proficiency will detract not only from their work performance but also their professional image at the worksite. If the afore-mentioned issues are appropriately and adequately addressed, they should alleviate both the linguistic and affective barriers likely to be encountered by these pre-service SA individuals and help them transit from students to professional practitioners.

7.2.3 Reformulation of the Chinese language policy for NCS students in Hong Kong

The findings of this study show that the EDB's one-size-fits-all mainstream Chinese language curriculum, together with the so-called "Learning Framework", elaborates its indifference to the different language needs of minority ethnic students insofar as it fails to recognise the reality that these students begin their Chinese studies at various levels and for different purposes. It is recommended that education policies should be directed at developing a centralised CSL curriculum suitable for home-grown NCS students to gain literacy and fluency in Chinese so as to help them reach the required Chinese proficiency at par with their local counterparts and hence gain equal access to a full range of life opportunities including academic advancement and career development.

7.3 Limitations and future research directions

Due to accessibility constraints, the scope of this study was limited to a small pool of target respondents at THEi. Given the innate design of a case study, the findings of this exploratory qualitative research are subject to future research to examine the applicability beyond THEi to other tertiary institutes, both self-financing and government-funded.

Noting that qualitative and quantitative research studies can be mutually complementary, a quantitative approach can be adopted using a questionnaire instrument with questions derived from the qualitative research data of this study. The prevalence and variation can then be tested with a larger sampling size in order to achieve generalisability.

7.3.1 Expansion to include four skills of language learning

The language needs described in this study do not spread across the four strands of listening, speaking, reading and writing. It is recommended that future research on language needs should be expanded to include these four strands because language abilities should be developed for specific domains of learning including interpersonal communication, acquisition of vocabulary and idioms, pronunciation and enunciation, and pragmatic knowledge, all serving for vocational and social purposes in local workplaces. It should also be noted that these strands are by no means isolated but rather inter-related and overlapping, i.e. in some instances, learning in one area is the foundation or pre-requisite for learning in another. The interrelationships are so intrigued and sometimes progressive that no each strand is standalone and thus should not be considered separately.

7.3.2 Wider spectrum of stakeholders

While a learner-centred curriculum designed according to students' self-perceived needs is good, it is even better if curriculum designers could take into due consideration opinions of other stakeholders – the real-life accounts of former graduates, institutional language policies, the expectations of employers and the pedagogical experiences of frontline CSL teachers.

7.3.3 Pedagogic and assessment considerations

Since this qualitative study focuses only on exploring and identifying the language learning needs SA students would have with an aim to inform CSL curriculum design, further research on curriculum development will be required, i.e. learning content, teaching methodologies, assessment strategies, and etc. In terms of assessment

strategies, it might be worth focusing on the identification of the initial level of Chinese language proficiency of these non-Chinese speaking students and to facilitate them to reach an acceptable level of it. In terms of classroom teaching practice, it is worth exploring what teaching methods should be adopted for these students sharing similar characteristics and backgrounds.

The above recommendations for future research reflect some areas that might be worth exploring in order to expand the existing body of literature on learning Chinese as a second language by ethnic minority students in the tertiary education sector of Hong Kong.

7.4 Final thoughts

In terms of ethnicities, minorities are not minor. A dynamic presence since the era of British sovereignty, the ethnic minority population in Hong Kong has been a driver of local socio-economic development and some of those who are now university students will continue to play a pivotal, constructive role in the society. They should be made visible and their language needs and career aspirations should be fully attended. Situated in the fissure between tertiary education and workplace paradigms, the researcher hopes that his study has lifted the veil from this dimly-perceived group of tertiary students in post-colonial Hong Kong; has heightened awareness of the need to equip them with job-required language skills; and more importantly, has provided some useful pointers for curriculum designers of teaching and learning Chinese as a second language for vocational purposes. Only with a solid, tailor-made curriculum, can South Asian students ultimately build up their linguistic competence and confidence to a level that will lead them to perform effectively in their future workplaces. To walk the talk, I am going to make full use of my research findings and propose the development of a workplace Chinese language module that caters for the South Asian students of THEi. Hopefully, the new module will be launched in the Academic Year of 2019-2020.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: List of Degree Programmes Offered by THEi in AY2019-20

Faculty of Management and Hospitality (FMH)	Faculty of Science and Technology (FST)	Faculty of Design and Environment (FDE)
Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Professional Accounting	Bachelor of Engineering (Honours) in Building Services Engineering	Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Advertising
Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Public Relations and Management	Bachelor of Engineering (Honours) in Civil Engineering	Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Fashion Design
Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Retail Management	Bachelor of Engineering (Honours) in Environmental Engineering and Management	Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Product Design
Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Culinary Arts and Management	Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Food Science and Safety	Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Horticulture and Landscape Management
Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Hotel Operations Management	Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Health Care	Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Landscape Architecture
Bachelor of Social Sciences (Honours) in Sports and Recreation Management	Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Testing and Certification	Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Surveying
	Bachelor of Engineering (Honours) in Aircraft Engineering	Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Information and Communications Technology
	Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Chinese Medicinal Pharmacy	Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Multimedia Technology and Innovation

Appendix 2: THEi's Academic Policy on Degree Structure and Requirements

4. The Bachelor's degree is an approved programme of normally 4 years or 8 semesters of full-time study, with English as the medium of instruction designed to equip graduates with specialist professional and broadly-applicable graduate or generic skills. After fulfilling all the requirements for the programme, a student is granted the award of Bachelor of X with Honours, with the honours classified as First Class (I), Second Class Division I (IIA), Second Class Division II (IIB), Third Class (III) and Pass (P), depending on performance.

Appendix 3: Academic Policy on Local Qualifications: Standard Entry Route

35. For non-Chinese speaking applicants who have learned Chinese Language for less than 6 years (including those who have never learned it) while receiving primary and secondary school education, or those who have learned Chinese Language for 6 years or more in schools but have been taught an adapted and simpler curriculum not normally applicable to the majority of students in local schools, the general Chinese Language requirement in the HKDSE Examination could be waived if the applicant possesses one of the following alternative Chinese Language qualifications:

Examination	Subject	Result Attained
GCSE/IGCSE/GCE (O-level)	Chinese Language	Grade C
GCE (AS-Level)	Chinese Language	Grade C
GCE (A-Level)	Chinese Language	Grade E
HKDSE	A Category C Subject	Grade C

For non-Chinese speaking students who do not possess any of the above alternative Chinese Language qualifications, the requirement of the HKDSE's Chinese Language Level 3 can still be waived but they will need to have an additional Elective subject equivalent to the HKDSE's Level 2.

Remark:

Starting from 2018, the UK-based examinations such as GCSE and IGCSE have adopted a new grading system using levels instead of grades for reporting results. A matching table between old and new grading is presented below for easy reference.

Old grading	New grading	
A*	9	The very top grade awarded to the highest scoring 20% (roughly) of those achieving grade 7. Fewer students will achieve 9 than achieved A*.
	8	Set at the mid-point between 7 and 9.
A	7	The proportion of students awarded grades 7-9 will be similar to the proportion who achieved an A or above in the old system.
B	6	
	5	This is the level considered to be a 'strong pass'.
C	4	A 'standard pass', roughly equivalent to a low C. The minimum grade you need to progress to A-level and similar courses. Check with your school or college as some will require higher entry grades.
D	3	
E	2	
F	1	
G	1	Awarded to roughly the same proportion of students who achieved a grade G in the old system.
U	U	

Source: <https://www.thestudentroom.co.uk/gcse/exams/new-gcse-grades-explained>

Appendix 4: Samples of Dairy Entries

Diary Entry *Sample 1*

Name: [REDACTED]

Date: 1st August 2017

Place: office

People involved: a courier and I

Situations or tasks requiring you to use Chinese in the workplace

Situation: Receiving a letter from a courier

Task: The courier lady walked in with a letter for my superior who was not in the office, so I received it on his behalf. The courier was a local Chinese and couldn't speak English. I was new to this office, so I called my superior as no one else was in the office at that time. So I called my superior and asked him, "I think she's asking me to stamp the document. Where's the stamp?". His answer was that there's no need to "stamp", just sign. However, after that, she turned to another page on the document and pointed at two bullet-points which were in Chinese – they seemed to be some kind of rules. She said "stamp" again, and so I signed there as well, but she kept telling me to write something else also. I pointed to my laptop's taskbar where the date was, thinking that she wanted me to write that. She kept speaking in Chinese, but I couldn't understand what she was saying. Finally, she took out her mobile phone and at that time I realized what she'd been asking for was my mobile number.

How did you feel about your language performance in these incidents?

I did get a bit confused, and felt a little helpless for a while. I wish I would've been able to at least say, "I'm sorry. Thank you very much and have a nice day" to the courier lady, as she seemed to be much older than I would expect a courier person to be, and she deserved to be respect. If I knew a bit of Chinese, or if she knew a bit of English, she would've probably felt that I'd treated her better.

What language abilities/areas ^{do} you want to improve?

Speaking

Diary Entry *Sample 2*

Name: [REDACTED]

Date: 8.8.2017

Place: the field

People involved: me, players, my colleague

Situations or tasks requiring you to use Chinese in the workplace

I was serving as an on-field first aider who needed to go out to the field whenever a player got injured. Once a local non-English speaking player was injured and I struggled to use my fragmented Cantonese to ask questions about his injury. He could point to where he was hurt but I couldn't follow up with questions as to what kind of pain or injury he sustained, or tell him to perform certain movements so that I could examine his injury. After a long while, other players, coaches and spectators turned to me as if they queried my ability. At the end, I needed a colleague to translate everything for me because local athletes were mostly speaking in Cantonese and I felt bad that he had to take a lot of time to translate, and that I had to ask very detailed information.

How did you feel about your language performance in these incidents?

It really made me feel embarrassed and incompetent. I'm afraid that my performance would leave a bad impression to the Rugby Union and I hope this would not ruin my name.

What language abilities/areas ^{do} you want to improve?

I want to learn how to ask diagnostic questions and give instructions in Cantonese.

Diary Entry *Sample 3*

Name: [REDACTED]

Date: 12 August 2017

Place: kitchen

People involved: new head chef, kitchen staff and me

Situations or tasks requiring you to use Chinese in the workplace

As the new head chef is a local unlike before it was an American head chef, who I would always have to speak in English and honestly in Hong Kong it's hard to find a workplace that is all in English. In all my past work experiences, I had to speak Chinese at least for certain areas. Since the head chef has changed, the menu has slightly changed as well, being a food runner, I needed to know each specific item on the plate so I asked him. As he was explaining in Chinese, I couldn't understand some parts, so I asked him again, and he was like "I thought you knew Chinese." His tone indicated that he had an expectation that I'm very fluent in Chinese. But ever since that day I had to talk to him in Chinese and everyone in the kitchen as they were all local.

How did you feel about your language performance in these incidents?

Working in an American restaurant, it was quite shocking that I had to use Chinese to communicate with the kitchen staff. But what made me very confused was that they expected me to be very fluent in Chinese while I did not expect them to be the same in English.

What language abilities/areas ^{do} you want to improve?

1. Spoken communication with local colleagues
2. Chinese pronunciation
3. Specific food items in Chinese

Diary Entry Sample 4

Name: [REDACTED]
Date: 11 August 2017
Place: HSBC
People involved: Teller

Situations or tasks requiring you to use Chinese in the workplace

I needed to go to the bank to deposit some cash and cheques. I spoke to a teller in English, but I was mistaken as a domestic helper. The teller didn't seem to fully understand what I said and asked me if I could speak Chinese. I replied that I couldn't.

How did you feel about your language performance in these incidents?

I feel upset because I am confident that my spoken English is fluent, but the bank staff still thinks I am some kind of a cheap working maid who has newly arrived in Hong Kong. I feel that I have been treated as a non-local person.

What language abilities/areas ^{do} you want to improve?

I guess I should work hard to improve my spoken Chinese. I really hope one day I can speak like a native Hong Konger.

Appendix 5: Coding Scheme for Data Analysis of Chapter Six

Global Theme	Organising Theme	Basic Theme	Supporting Quote
Necessities	Speaking skills	Ability to initiate conversations	Bu: “speak fluent Chinese” Saman: “speak Chinese” Nigel: “not able to speak Chinese” Mr Leung : “good verbal skills to converse”
		Oral interactions	
		Answering & replying	
	Content knowledge	Professional terminology	Nigel: “how to say anthropometric measurements in Chinese” Bu: “specific food items in Chinese”
		Jargon	
		Special vocabulary	
		Technical words	
	Socio-linguistic knowledge	Understanding socio-cultural meanings of utterances in the informal workplace settings	Bu: “gossip using slang words and bad language” Dr Lee: “swearing and mixing well in the office”
		Using colloquialisms, slangs, idioms, swearwords	
Lacks	Pragmatic skills	Incorrect use of formal and informal language	Anjali: “introduce myself to a cleaning lady and think that the way I speak like I am reading” Nigel: “find that the way I speak is not appropriate enough to cheer up the sick patient” Saman: “puzzle that why the pest control technicians kept saying sorry” Kurt: “fail to truly decode his supervisor’s comments on his job performance”
		Inability to transfer inappropriate norms of language from linguistic knowledge of English	
		Misinterpretations of Chinese words	

	Pronunciation & Tones	Mispronunciation	Bu: “kitchen staff laugh at her weird pronunciations”
		Wrong Tones	
	Chinese word processing skills	External and Internal written communication	Anjali: “rely on google translate for written communication”
		Digitalised job tasks: emails; filling in e-forms	
		Writing electronically	
Wants	Desire for security	Unemployment after graduation	Mike: “if not competent in both English and Chinese, worried about being jobless” Kurt: “infrastructure projects in Macau and Guangdong, afraid that never get picked” Dr Lee: “multilingual staff are most favoured for a job promotion for senior positions” Dr Lee: “for job security and career boost”
		Dim career prospects	
		Post-employment survival	
	Desire for social inclusion/integration	Mixing/mingling with locals	Mike: “If I am able to speak Chinese, I can connect with local colleagues and get into their friend zone.” Anjali: “I feel lonely and I’m sure the cleaning lady felt the same too.” Bu: “gossiping at work” Saman: “If I was able to express thankfulness in Chinese to the locals, I would be respected.” Nigel: “I feel it’s more respectful if we can speak Chinese”
		Access denial	
		Earning respect for being a Hong Konger	
		Having a native-like accent	
		Sense of belonging	

				Kurt – “I can speak like a local Hong Kong person, so I can hang out with my local colleagues”
	Desire for self-esteem	Negative emotions that hamper work life	Frustration	Saman: “I have anxiety disorder because of unable to speak Chinese.” Mike: “I want to be competent.” Anjali: “I hope my colleagues will think that I am worthy.” Nigel: “I should be accountable.” Kurt: “I feel a great sense of achievement because his colleagues think that his Chinese is good.”
			Nervousness	
			Fear	
			Anxiety	
		By-products of language competence	Recognition	
			Sense of achievement	
			Self-belief	
			Self-confidence	

Appendix 6: Information Sheet

TECHNOLOGICAL AND HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTE OF HONG KONG

Workplace Chinese Language Needs of South Asian Undergraduates: A Case Study of a Self-financing Vocational Institute in Hong Kong

Information Sheet

Dear Sir / Madam,

I am **Emil Li, SGEL** of the Technological and Higher Education Institute of Hong Kong (THEi). You are cordially invited to participate in a research study entitled *Workplace Chinese Language Needs of South Asian Undergraduates: A Case Study of a Self-financing Vocational Institute in Hong Kong*. Details of this study are as follows.

RESEARCH TEAM

Mr Emil Li

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This research study aims at exploring undergraduate South Asian students' language needs drawn from their internship experience, and enhancing the understanding of their expectations in terms of support and resources of learning the Chinese language for career preparation.

TARGET SAMPLE POPULATION

Ethnic minority students, in particular those from South or Southeast Asia

PROCEDURES

8-10 student diarists will be requested to write a diary entry on every internship day across their entire internship period. A weekly face-to-face discussion with each of them will be held and preferably video-taped or audio-taped.

POTENTIAL RISKS / DISCOMFORTS AND THEIR MINIMIZATION

During the interview, you can refuse to answer any questions you find objectionable or unpleasant. You can also decline, discontinue or even withdraw from the research for any reason, at any stage and without any adverse consequences.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS

I sincerely hope that my research study will shed light on the design and development of a CSL curriculum suitable for EM university students in the short run and for society to harness the productive potential of a multicultural workforce in the long run.

COMPENSATION FOR PARTICIPATION

nil

CONFIDENTIALITY

I promise that the information obtained in the study will be kept strictly confidential and used for research purposes only, and that the identity of individual subjects will not be revealed in any way in any reports related to the study without prior approval of the participants.

The following steps will be taken to ensure confidentiality, privacy and security of data management.

Security of Data Storage	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Encrypt all the e-files➤ Store all forms of e-data in password-protected electronic devices such as USB, PC and smartphone➤ Store paper files and tapes securely in a lockable pedestal cabinet in the research premises➤ Destroy all of the data when the research concludes➤ Allow informants to review and erase any video/audio/written records that they feel uncomfortable with
Anonymity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Use coded names/pseudonyms in any forms of publication (written or electronic) and presentations (verbal or visual)
Confidentiality	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Strictly adhere to the Data Protection Act 1998 (UK) and the Personal Data Privacy Ordinance Cap 486 (HK)➤ Keep informants' personal information in strict confidence and with great respect

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

Your participation is entirely voluntary. This means that you can choose to stop at any time without negative consequences.

QUESTIONS AND CONCERNS

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact **Mr Emil Li** by phone at [REDACTED].

Please kindly complete and return the attached reply slip to me at your earliest convenience. Thank you very much.

Yours sincerely,

Emil Li, SGEL
THEi

Appendix 7: Consent Form

TECHNOLOGICAL AND HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTE OF HONG KONG

Workplace Chinese Language Needs of South Asian Undergraduates: A Case Study of a Self-financing Vocational Institute in Hong Kong

Consent Form

Please choose one only by checking the box:

<input type="checkbox"/>	I agree to enter the above study. The information collected will be used for the above-named research project. I have been informed of the study's purposes and method. I have been given the opportunity to ask questions and sufficient time to consider whether to participate or not. I agree that the relevant parties (University of Bristol and THEi) will have access right to my data. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I have the right to withdraw at any time and without any adverse consequences. I have been assured that strict confidentiality will be maintained and no reference will be made to my identity in reporting the findings. I understand that my participation will be taped/video-recorded and I consent to the use of this material as part of the project.
<input type="checkbox"/>	I do not want to participate in the above study.

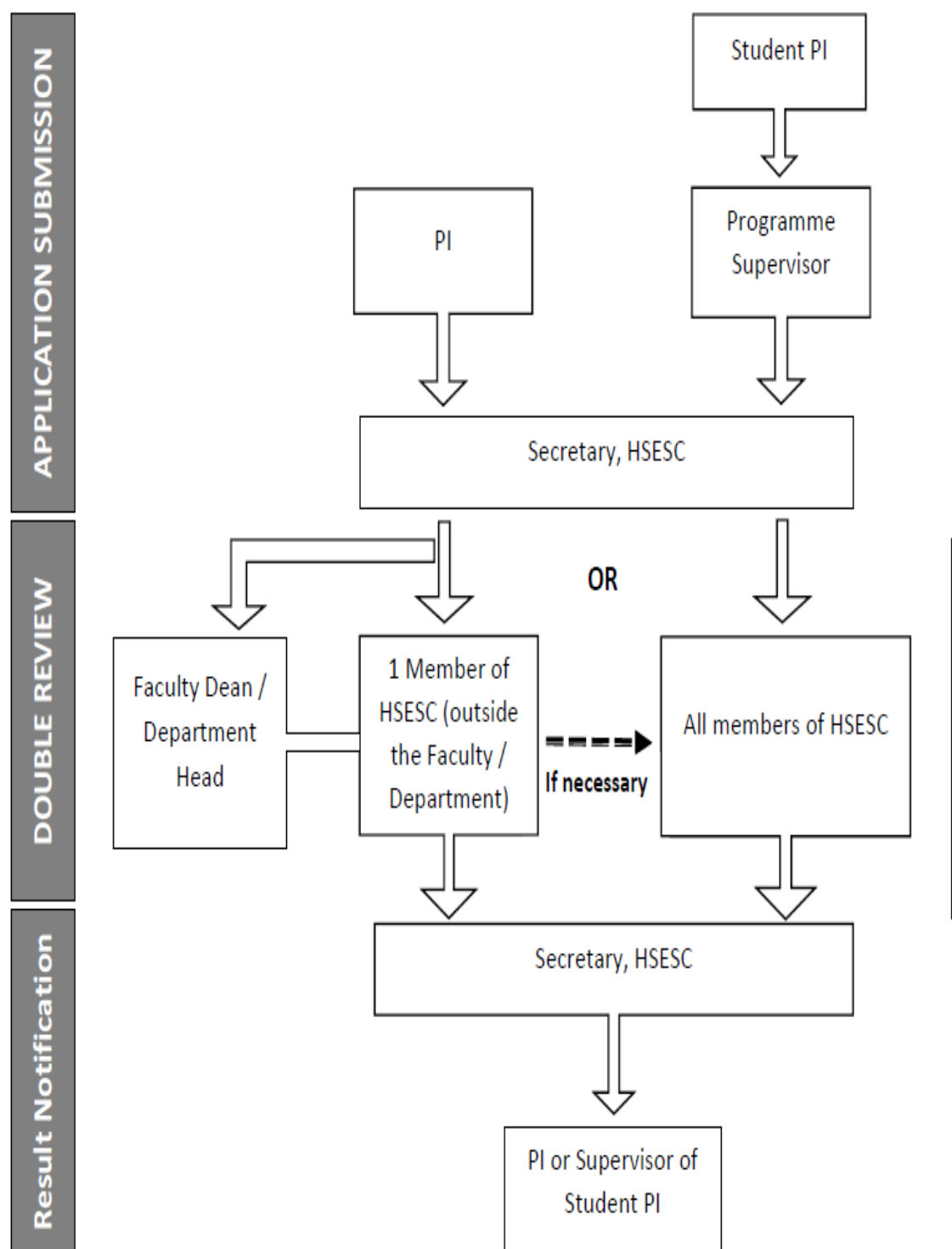
Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 8: Process of Ethical Review at THEi

Process of Ethical Review



Appendix 9: Profiles of Research Informants

Focus Group Participants

	Coded Name	Ethnicity	Native/Home Language	Age	Gender	Age upon Arrival in HK	Public Exam Taken	Chinese Subject Result	Degree Major	Focus Group Attended
1	S	Nepalese	Nepali	19	F	local born	GCSE	A*	Public Relations	Session 1
2	G	Filipino	Tagalog + English	19	F	3	GCSE	A*	Fashion Design	Session 1
3	E	Nepalese	Nepali	17	F	local born	GCSE	A*	Public Relations	Session 2
4	M	Filipino	Tagalog	22	M	4	GCSE	A*	Public Relations	Session 2
5	P	Nepalese	Nepali	24	F	5	GCSE	A*	Fashion Design	Session 1
6	R	Indonesian	Bahasa + English	18	M	6	GCSE	A*	Culinary Arts	Session 2
7	B	Indian	English	19	F	local born	GCSE	A*	Culinary Arts	Session 2
8	D	Filipino	Tagalog + English	20	F	local born	GCSE	A*	Hotel Operations	Session 1
9	I	Indian	English	19	F	6	GCSE	A*	Health Care	Session 1
10	Z	Pakistani	English	20	M	6	GCSE	A*	Accounting	Session 2
11	N	Indian	Konkani + English	21	M	local born	GCSE	A*	Health Care	Session 1

Description of Diarists

No	pseudonym	Degree Major	Ethnicity	Internship Provider	Job Title
1	Nigel	Health Care	Indian	Our Lady of Maryknoll Hospital	Intern
Brief Profile	Nigel, a health care student of THEi, worked as an intern in the Dietetic Department of a local hospital. Internally, he needed to maintain regular communication with his supervisor, who was a dietician, and work closely with various clinicians in different departments; whereas externally, he had to meet patients and their family members in the ward to ask for diet-related information for the dietician to analyse and provide subsequent medical advice.				
No	pseudonym	Degree Major	Ethnicity	Internship Provider	Job Title
2	Mike	Sports and Recreational Management	Filipino	Hong Kong Rugby Union	Intern Sports Therapist
Brief Profile	Mike, a sport therapy student of THEi, worked as an intern in the Hong Kong Rugby Union. Internally, he needed to attend oral briefings about the event rundown, the profile of athletes and his role; whereas externally, he had to make direct face-to-face contact with local sport players and coaches on the field.				
No	pseudonym	Degree Major	Ethnicity	Internship Provider	Job Title
3	Kurt	Environmental Engineering	Nepalese + Turkish (Mixed)	Globalization Monitor	Intern
Brief Profile	Kurt, an environmental engineering student of THEi, worked as an intern in the Globalization Monitor, a non-profit organisation advocating environmental justice. Internally, he needed to take orders from and report progress to his supervisor, who was the director of the organisation, and at the same time collaborate with his colleagues at different ranks and positions in the office; whereas externally, he had to monitor the organisation's social media platforms such as Facebook and WeChat in both Chinese and English.				
No	pseudonym	Degree Major	Ethnicity	Internship Provider	Job Title
4	Anjali	Professional Accounting	Nepalese	Beven International Limited	Accounts Assistant
Brief Profile	Anjali, an accounting student of THEi, worked as Accounts Assistant in the Beven International Limited, which was a trading company. Internally, she needed to provide full support to the manager and other team members for daily trade operations; whereas externally, she had to deal directly with clients including following up with their orders and handling their enquiries. In addition, she needed to go to the bank for cashing, depositing, and (wire) transfers.				

No	pseudonym	Degree Major	Ethnicity	Internship Provider	Job Title
5	Bu	Culinary Arts and Management	Indian	Employees Only	Food Runner and Server
Brief Profile	Bu, a culinary arts student of THEi, worked as a food runner and server in Employees Only, a high-end American-based restaurant serving contemporary American cuisine in Lan Kwai Fong. Internally, she needed to work side-by-side with chefs and kitchen staff, the dishwashing team, waiters and waitresses, bartenders, and host staff; whereas externally, she had to serve guests and react to their needs when necessary.				
No	pseudonym	Degree Major	Ethnicity	Internship Provider	Job Title
6	Saman	Public Relations and Management	Pakistani	Just Service Hong Kong Limited	Social Media Intern
Brief Profile	Saman, a public relations student of THEi, worked as a social media intern in Just Service Hong Kong Limited, an insurance broker and financial adviser. Internally, she reported her work progress and results to her supervisors and executives in English because none of them were from Hong Kong and could speak Chinese; whereas externally, she had to handle all aspects of publicity needs for both domestic and international production and distribution on different promotion channels.				

Interviewees for Triangulation

	Name	Title	Affiliation
1	Dr Lee	Programme Leader of BA (Hons) in Public Relations and Management	THEi
2	Mr Leung	Internship Coordinator for BA (Hons) in Hotel Operations and Management	THEi
3	Dr Choi	Year Tutor of BSocSc (Hons) in Sports and Recreational Management	THEi
4	Mr Yu	Intern of the Dietetic Department	Our lady of Maryknoll Hospital
5	Ms Lo	Language Consultant	MJB Intercommunication
6	Ms Cheung	Accounts Manager	An international accounting firm